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COMMONWEAL

A Review of Religion, Politics, and Culture

October 8, 1999

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To the Editors

Where is the short giraffe?

Considering the editorial "Expelling Darwin" [September 10], I was disappointed that a third opinion about Darwin's thought was not even mentioned. Isn't it held by some scientists that Darwin's theories fail to account for the lack of evidence to support a gradual branching off of man and monkey? In other words, the evidence on hand so far suggests different stages of evolution separated by great gaps of time: Once there was monkey, then there was man. No evidence of "micro-evolution"—the slow, gradual process of natural selection—can be found. (For example, if giraffes gradually developed long necks, shouldn't we be able to find fossils of the intermediary steps?)

Why haven't we found intermediary fossils that attest to the gradual change in species? Or have we? I'm asking not because I am in the least bit anxious over who created me, but simply because I'm interested. Have you heard of this third opinion, or am I out of the chain myself?

(REV.) DAVID H. WERNING
Leonardtown, Md.

From the editors: You're in the loop. A number of scientists and philosophers point to gaps in the fossil record as one reason to question "Darwinism." One such is Phillip E. Johnson, professor of law at the University of California, Berkeley, and author of *Darwin on Trial, Reason in the Balance,* and *Defeating Darwinism (by Opening Minds),* all published by InterVarsity Press. Johnson reviewed Stephen Jay Gould's *Rocks of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life* in *Commonweal* for April 23. The current (September/October) issue of *Books & Culture* includes an exchange between Johnson and Robert Pennock, author of *Tower of Babel: The Evidence against the New Creationism* (MIT Press).

Darwin & Adam's sin

Your editorial on "Expelling Darwin" rightly points out that Catholics have not been much troubled by theories of evolution because they are not tied to a literal reading of the creation stories in Genesis, and have little difficulty imagining that God made evolution the vehicle of his creative design. But I wonder why Catholics have not been more troubled by the implications of Darwinism for Christian theories of Original Sin.

Christian theology has long taught that the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus were required because the sin of Adam had jeopardized the salvation of all humankind. Moreover, the sin of Adam has traditionally been considered the source of natural evils such as disease and death. The Genesis story is not only one of creation; it also portrays a universe in harmony, and suggests that natural disasters and the deadly predation prevailing among living things were the consequence not of God's design but of Adam's sin.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states (#376): "The inner harmony of the human person, the harmony between man and woman, and finally the harmony between the first couple and all creation comprised the state called 'original justice,'" which was to be lost "by the sin of our first parents" (#379). But Darwinism gives us a universe where chance rules and predation is normal. Even if we adjust our theology to have God "ensoul" a pri-

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75 COMMONWEAL

1999 marks Commonweal's 75th year of publication.
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COMMONWEAL

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mate or two who are then capable of sinning and forfeiting "original justice" for their descendants, aren't we left with a divine plan that includes a harsh nature, bloody in tooth and claw? Or did that blessed moment occur immediately after the transition to *Homo sapiens*, briefly replacing the Darwinian competition with a universal harmony resting precariously on Adam's virtue?

I can imagine various answers to these questions but I would very much like to know what the theologians have to say about them. Could you commission an article addressing the problem and providing bibliographical guidance for nonscholars?

JOHN C. MOORE
Bloomington, Ind.

Wedding the churches

Thank you for James D. Davidson's "Outside the Church: Whom Catholics Marry & Where" [September 10]. While its content may not be news to those in related pastoral ministries, for the general reader it is a helpful overview. In this regard it is important to be clear on church teaching and to integrate the findings of a new Creighton University study, "Ministry to Interchurch Marriages."

First, we need to grasp the Roman Catholic distinction between *interchurch* marriage between two Christians who share the same faith, even when their churches may not be in full communion, and *interreligious* marriage between believers from different religious traditions. Christian interchurch marriages may become truly *ecumenical* if couples grow into an understanding of the unity they share in Christ, the lingering divisions among the churches, and the stages of both their churches on the road to full communion. The magisterium has come to recognize these marriages as instances of sacramental sharing; outreach to such couples is greatly strengthened when pastoral agents grasp the church's ecumenical responsibility in this respect.

Second, in dioceses with long experience of interchurch marriages, engagement programs with the variety of options suggested in your article do well to include mentoring by successful interchurch (or, preferably, ecumenical) couples. The aim of such programs should be to help young people see the possibilities of successful interchurch living, where both their unity in Christ and the diversity of their communities can be resources for their relationship, rather than sources of alienation from the church. Pastoral agents should of course know the dialogues the Catholic church is engaged in with partner churches. Additionally, in dioceses where interchurch families are a significant component, it is best to design marriage encounter programs with ecumenical participation.

BROTHER JEFFREY GROS, F.S.C.
Washington, D.C.
The writer is assistant director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Not a store but a center

In the closing of the Paraclete Book Center [announcement, September 24 issue], its customers, the Archdiocese of New York, and indeed many far-flung religious communities of different faith traditions are losing a treasure.

Forty-eight years ago, a woman with a master's degree from the University of Chicago and a vision of the Catholic church as a work-in-progress acquired the inventory of the parish library of Saint Jean Baptiste on Lexington Avenue and turned it into the Paraclete Book Center. Its official opening was on the feast of Saint Teresa of Avila, doctor of the church, October 15, 1951.

As its name suggests, and as Liz Sullivan intended, the Paraclete was to be, and continued through the years, not a store but a center. It was at the Center that Frank Sheed, Maisie Ward, and many other prophetic pre-Vatican II visionaries gathered to wrestle with the issues of liturgy, theology, and social justice.

There is much more to the story, but it needs a historian more objective than myself. Liz was my sister, my soul mate, my boon companion. In whatever history is written of the Catholic church in the last half of the twentieth century, I can only hope that adequate space is given to the faithful ministry of the Word, proclaimed and celebrated for almost five decades at the Paraclete Book Center.

NANCY SULLIVAN MURRAY
Syracuse, N.Y.

From the editors: To praise for Elizabeth Sullivan, we add praise for Mary Butler who has run the Paraclete since

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Wanted
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Commonweal is looking for a journalist/writer to join its staff as an assistant or associate editor. The individual should possess excellent writing and analytical skills and plenty of opinions (the more well-reasoned the better).

Responsibilities will include manuscript reading and editing, copy and proof editing, editorial and straight newswriting. Some previous newspaper or magazine experience is desirable, as is knowledge about the range of issues—religious, political, literary, and cultural—that the magazine covers.

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Frontline pope

Whether you love him, hate him, or can't quite figure him out, there is no denying that Pope John Paul II has left his mark on both the church and the world during the last twenty years. Certainly one indication of the pope's stature was the decision of PBS's prestigious series "Frontline" to inaugurate its new season with a two-and-a-half-hour examination of Karol Wojtyla's life and papacy on September 28. When it comes to the intricacies of history and the paradoxes of personality, television has inherent limitations. But "John Paul II: The Millennial Pope" was for the most part a visually and dramatically compelling portrait of a complicated, and contradictory, man.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the broadcast was the varied cast of commentators "Frontline" gathered to offer perspectives on someone all agreed is one of the seminal figures of the age. In addition to the more familiar suspects, including University of Cambridge historian Eamon Duffy, Wojtyla biographer (with Carl Bernstein) Marco Politi, reporter Robert Suro, writer James Carroll, and Jewish scholar Arthur Hertzberg, "Frontline" solicited the views of novelist Robert Stone, modern Europe expert Tony Judt, feminist Germaine Greer, and physicist David Berlinski. If the commentaries on the pope's Marian devotion and opposition to abortion were predictably reductive and psychologized, "Frontline" avoided pat formulations for the most part. Still, the outlandish did put in an appearance. Hans Küng was trotted out to make one of his patented over-the-top indictments, charging the pope with responsibility "for innumerable abortions" because of his position on birth control. For the defense, Monsignor Lorenzo Albacete contended with equal exaggeration that just "a glimpse of this man can mean...[one's] whole life changes and hope is possible."

Sometimes the same expert is heard getting one thing right only to get the next thing wrong. Germaine Greer was extravagant and compelling on the power of liturgy but sophomoric on God's responsibility for evil. Tony Judt was defeated in trying to explain the pope's views about women in light of his Marian piety. However, in summing up John Paul's broader significance Judt proved sure-footed. "His legacy is the debate," Judt said. "His legacy is the angry conversation that he provoked over faith vs. modernity....He has forced upon his opponents a conversation that they would never have had with the previous popes. And in terms which were his terms. And he did, to that degree, shape the conversation at the end of the millennium in a way no one else has."

Much emphasis was placed, rightly, on John Paul's efforts to bring Jews and Catholics together in the wake of the Holocaust and to disavow anti-Semitism in unmistakable terms. Pointedly, the program alleges that the pope himself did nothing overt to help the Jews during the Nazi occupation of Poland. This sin of omission, it is suggested, is one reason for his unprecedented gestures of remorse and good will toward the Jewish community. With the exception of an egregious bit of speculation by feminist Marina Warner about a connection between the Holocaust and the pope's opposition to abortion (she also offers a prochoice interpretation of the Annunciation!), John Paul's deeply felt connection to Judaism was well conveyed.

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"The Millennial Pope" also shows how profoundly the Romantic nationalism of Poland has shaped John Paul and how shrewdly he used his instinctive understanding of his countrymen to confront and eventually defeat totalitarian communism. More perfunctory was "Frontline's" effort to explain the pope's condemnation of liberation theology. Although John Paul's uncomprehending treatment of Archbishop Oscar Romero deserves censure, the program too easily conflates the very different crises in El Salvador and Nicaragua. Yes, in some sense John Paul's experience of Soviet communism blinded him to the possibility of good in Marxist-influenced liberation theology. His refusal to listen to Romero, who was no wild-eyed radical, was a profound tragedy. However, the effort of Nicaragua's Sandinistas to subordinate the church to "the revolution" was nothing the pope could tolerate. "Frontline" didn't keep these two issues straight.

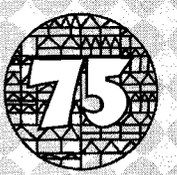
"The Millennial Pope" is even less discriminating in trying to come to terms with John Paul's devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Since Marian piety is as old as the church itself, and historically more popular among women than men, attributing John Paul's devotion merely to some ill-defined psychological need for a maternal protector and refuge is hardly persuasive. The way in which the pope's Marianism is linked to his views on abortion and ordination is equally clichéd and simplistic. The idea that Mary's incorruptibility might have more to do with how the Christian hope for bodily resurrection sanctifies human physical intimacy than with denigrating female sexuality never seems to have crossed anyone's mind at "Frontline." As a consequence, the program's discussion of the pope and women is patronizing and self-satisfied.

Yet just as you might be about to give up on "The Millennial Pope" it surprises you. Robert Stone's remarks early in the program about the supposedly devastating effects John Paul's policies have had on morale within the church seemed hyperbolic and ill-informed. "This pope is killing them," Stone says of his still-practicing Catholic friends, "he's destroying their religion. He's destroying their belief and he's destroying their faith." This overestimates the pope's power while underestimating the resiliency of most Catholics. Stone shows a much firmer grasp of reality when he voices his own reservations about abortion. "He's on to something," he says of the pope's defense of the unborn. "It's—there's a contradiction there...that we have to deal with....The ending of life, even fetal life, for the convenience of an individual, does tend toward a situation in which living people can be killed for the convenience of individuals."

It is always refreshing to hear the truth spoken plainly. And that, of course, is what millions have responded to in hearing John Paul II speak out in the defense of human dignity. If you missed "The Millennial Pope" on its first showing, keep an eye out for a possible rerun. John Paul II's life, "Frontline" reminds us, "is a journey that says as much about us as it does about him."

"Just be patient, Osgood. Remember—Rome wasn't fully regulated in a day."

From the archives



Throughout 1999, Commonweal *has been celebrating its 75th anniversary. Here from the June 24, 1938 issue is an excerpt from the magazine's "Week by Week" feature titled "The Czech Election." It comments on Hitler's overtures to the ethnic German populace of Czechoslovakia's Sudeten region.*

The present moment in Czechoslovakia—a moment of perilous balance following upon its series of municipal elections—is one in which disastrous possibilities of many sorts may be computed....For instance, the Berlin press as well as official Reich spokesmen have resumed their denunciatory tone, lately laid aside—mingling, with unconscious irony, protests against Czech "terrorism" with exultation at the results of an election which manifestly, by those very returns, was free and unterrorized. This might very reasonably be construed as notice that Germany means to move in. On the other hand, the Henleinists [the pro-German party] are still treating with the Czech government, being in receipt of part of its final minorities proposal; by wise agreement, this proposal is kept secret until the groups concerned have considered it—but the most elementary political sense must tell us that it will be a proposal as favorable as the government can possibly make it and still remain a government. On the other hand, too, the Slovak minority, long bitterly dissident, appears to be responding to Premier Hodza's efforts at conciliation; and if this *rapprochement*, very considerably overdue, is effected, it will remove the Slovaks from the category of possible allies of the Sudeten group in trouble making. Finally, the direct warning of France to Germany, and the energetic implications of England's latest moves, will not, we think, go unregarded. All is not yet lost, by any means. THE EDITORS

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JOHN GARVEY

A GOD WHO HURTS

Still a mystery

There is a little boy in my parish, about two years old, who has just had a bone marrow transplant which, we hope, will cure a rare form of childhood leukemia. I try to see him and his family about once a week, and have to scrub up and put on a sterile gown and gloves to enter the hospital unit he is staying in. His parents and grandparents take shifts; someone is with him constantly. When I visit him I play with him for a few minutes, then anoint him, and he cries because he knows this is somehow an official action: Just as doctors and nurses advance with needles and stethoscopes, priests advance with oil. He always seems relieved that it doesn't hurt, and is playing again within minutes. He's at the age when children point at anything, for reasons that are sometimes baffling to adults. At the moment his prognosis is uncertain, though the doctor is guardedly optimistic.

This is heartbreaking, but at the same time there is something beautiful about it: His family is so loving and attentive, the medical staff so compassionate, that you know something holy is happening here, as well as something deeply sad. At times like this I am reminded of my first visceral experience of fatherhood. My daughter was born prematurely and almost died. I remember looking at her through two panes of glass and knowing that I would die to keep her alive.

That experience helped me realize what it means when we call God "father": The love shown in Christ, who referred to God as "father" constantly, is a much more powerful example of that same fierce love. It is important to emphasize the ferocity, because centuries of philosophy and theology have accustomed us to thinking of God as the prime mover, an impassive source of being, one who is beyond suffering. But this is not biblical so much as it is a development of Greek philosophy. Pascal is more biblical when he says that Christ suffers until the end of time. Jesus tells Philip, "He who sees me has seen the Father." And this is said by one who is about to die for us.

When we refer to God as compassionate we often think of the word as meaning something like "merciful" or "loving," and of course it does mean those things, but the word itself means, at root, "suffering with." You are only one with another person when you are capable of suffering with her, when your life has become that close. Love is not serious without compassion.

This is what makes baptism scary. We are baptized into Christ's death and the hope of his Resurrection. He has joined our lives with his; but we have joined his life with ours, which means we agree to live as he did. And that agreement calls us to a willingness even to die, to live like people who have died and have nothing to fear from death.

Most of us are very far from this. At moments when we are forced into suffering with another, as the sick child's parents and grandparents are, we begin to know something more about God's love for us. It is a painful knowledge. It leads some people to question God's goodness: We would rather have a God who fixes things than one who simply suffers with us. Even if we believe that at the end the suffering will be over, that resurrection and glory are the true end of the tale, we take little comfort from this as we look into the face of a suffering child, or see someone fading into Alzheimer's disease. In fact, seeking comfort seems almost indecent in these contexts; it is as if we are evading the horror of suffering, the full tragedy.

Orthodoxy teaches that God does not will human suffering; it is the result of sin. This can hardly be demonstrated in any philosophically satisfying way. But we can see that compassion and suffering are connected, and so are compassion and forgiveness. To forgive without compassion is not really forgiveness, just as a truce is not really peace. Real forgiveness understands the offender with love and compassion, not excusing the offense, but understanding the pain, the woundedness, from which almost every offense proceeds. If Christ is the one through whom we are forgiven and reconciled, if we are baptized into his death and the hope of resurrection, we can learn what this means only by entering into a life which risks being wounded. This is what compassion involves.

And unsatisfying as this may be—it doesn't, after all, fix every situation, and the people toward whom we are compassionate will die, and some of them

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will continue to hate us—it is the only way in which we can begin to approach the mystery of Christ's life among us and in us.

Christianity is not, finally, a philosophy. An Albanian monk once spoke to some of our parishioners, immigrants from Albania, where the persecution of their relatives under the repressive Communist regime made many of them bitter. One man had a particularly hard time accepting the idea that we must forgive our enemies. Father Joan (now Metropolitan Joan of Korce) told him that you cannot reason your way to this; it has been commanded, by someone who forgives us—but can forgive us only if we forgive others. We become capable of truly being forgiven only when we are truly capable of forgiving.

If there ever was anything to the idea that God is beyond suffering, it may be because God lives where it has all been accomplished, and knows how the story ends.

There is little here that is abstract. It is all about relationships between persons; this is what the doctrine of the Trinity means, among other things. No self, not even God's self, exists in isolation. God's unknowable self has been revealed in flesh and blood and bone. During my seminary years, one of my best teachers tried to cut through the ways in which seminarians and other Christians tend to theologize: "You strike me," he said, "and I refuse to strike you back, and this is how we discuss the Trinity." □

OF SEVERAL MINDS

WILLIAM PFAFF

NUCLEAR DETERRENCE

Why separate rules for the U.S.?

India has officially published its nuclear strategy, which it describes as that of minimum credible deterrence. This, in theory, is a reasonable policy, if any nuclear-weapons doctrine can be said to be reasonable. However, the details of the Indian policy, as set forth by India's National Security Council last August 17, merit the opposition Congress party's criticism that India is inviting escalation of the nuclear arms race with Pakistan.

Neither country can afford this, and neither needs it. The communal and territorial quarrels between them are unworthy of two intelligent nations. With respect to its Chinese neighbor, whose future is distinctly unpredictable, India has a more plausible rationale for a nuclear deterrent.

India's nuclear force will consist of submarine-launched missiles; air-launched missiles from low-level penetration aircraft; and mobile ground-launched ballistic missiles. Its employment will be governed by an "evolving concept tied to the strategic environment" and to technological developments. The prime minister "or his designated successor" will control it. (How the successor is to be designated is a security secret.)

Such a force sets India's threshold of "minimum credible" deterrence pretty high. This sea-land-air deterrent sounds like a miniature—or not-so miniature—nuclear triad resembling that of the United States. America's nuclear force, however, was not developed for minimum deterrence, but for second-strike deterrence, a vastly different thing. ("We can strike you, but you will be afraid to strike back at us because of the further horrors we can commit against you.")

India's program was made public in response to a request from the U.S. government, which for years has tried to prevent nuclear proliferation. The problem has been that the United States exempts itself from the nonproliferation it presses upon others. As the *New York Times Magazine* reported in March 1998, the United States continues to modernize its own nuclear forces, as permitted under existing strategic arms-reduction treaties with Russia. Last year the Clinton administration programmed more money for modernization and simulated testing than, on annual average, the United States spent during the cold war to create America's nuclear force.

Today, at any given moment, the United States has on alert some 2,300 warheads, with explosive power equivalent to 44,000 Hiroshimas. In these circumstances, U.S. pressure on newly nuclear nations to give up their weapons has neither a generally accepted rationale nor logical weight. The U.S. position is that the United States is entitled to possess and continually improve nuclear forces beyond all rational connection to existing or foreseeable threats. But others should not have them at all. Grudging exception has been made for countries that are already nuclear powers, since there is nothing to be done about them: Britain, France, Russia, China, and (unofficially) Israel. Until recent months, India and Pakistan officially possessed only nuclear "devices," not weapons. Everyone else is expected to renounce nuclear weapons.

So long as the post-cold war world seemed reasonably risk-free, and the United States seemed a law-abiding *status quo* power, this case could be made with some success, whatever the grumbling in other capitals. This is no longer true. NATO's intervention in Yugoslavia undermined the U.S. position. The demonstration made there of the sophistication (if not always the performance) of advanced U.S. weapons, and of the unparalleled overall capability of American forces, made a great impression on both allies and others.

The NATO intervention ignored UN authority, since the NATO allies presumed they would not get Security Council support, and Russian and Chinese objections were overridden. That rather frightened countries that still think of the UN as a shield against arbitrary actions by the great powers. The affair provided a lesson in the utility of nuclear deterrence. Had Slobodan Milosevic possessed a nuclear deterrent, NATO would not have bombed his

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country. Deterrence—that of the irrational threat—would have functioned.

There will be no general halt to nuclear proliferation until the United States and the other great nuclear powers take the lead in cutting their armaments toward at least the level of minimum credible deterrence, and then open the debate on eventually going beyond that.

A second debate worth opening concerns multilateral deterrence of "first use"—an agreement among existing nuclear powers that any first use of nuclear weapons would bring multilateral retaliation—which would not have to be, but could be, nuclear. That would provide a much more convincing rebuttal to nuclear proliferation than Washington's calls for the disarmament of everyone except the United States (and its friends). Without radical rethinking of the nuclear problem, the post-Kosovo world is on its way toward proliferation on a scale not yet seen.

Dwight Eisenhower ended his presidential term in 1960 with a warning to Americans about the danger that exists in the alliance between industry and a military establishment whose professional inclination is toward paranoia. Ronald Reagan ended his term of office at Reykjavik as a nuclear disarmer. What if Bill Clinton were to end his term with a decisive cut in America's nuclear array? □

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Julia Vitullo-Martin

MONKEY BUSINESS

What really happened in Tennessee

When the Kansas Board of Education voted this summer to remove overt references to the theory of evolution from that state's science curriculum, specters of Tennessee's "Monkey Trial" reappeared. The media had a field day—as they had the first time—writing about ignorant bumpkins who were again presuming to rule on scientific matters well beyond their expertise. The original Monkey Trial was indeed historic and important—but not for the reasons given in the media then or now. As Harvard paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould recently wrote, "The usual reading of the trial as an epic struggle between benighted Yahooism and resplendent virtue simply cannot suffice—however strongly this impression has been fostered."

The Scopes trial never was a real criminal trial, with a real criminal defendant in any serious jeopardy of the consequences of his conviction. The entire case was a set-up—and a vivid example of what can go wrong when set-up cases are allowed to proceed.

The American Civil Liberties Union, founded during World War I, had advertised throughout Tennessee for a teacher willing to make a "friendly challenge" to Tennessee's law forbidding the teaching of evolution. John T. Scopes, a football coach and part-time physics teacher, volunteered.

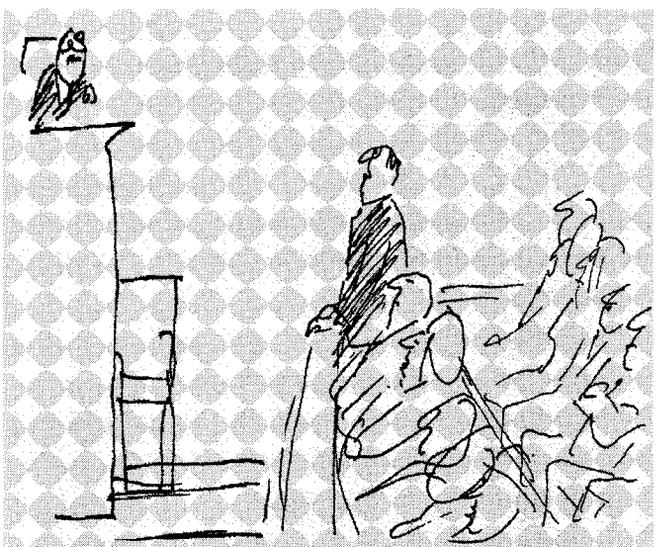
Scopes was not your usual football coach. With his tiny horn-rimmed glasses, white shirt and tie, and sincere expression, he looked like a young professor. Indeed, he had first learned about evolution as a student at the University of Kentucky, whose president led a pro-evolution fight. After the trial, Scopes went on to earn a Ph.D. in geology at the University of Chicago.

Scopes pointed out to the ACLU that he had probably never actually taught the offending ideas, although he had used the offending textbook, G. W. Hunter's *A Civic Biology*, to help students review for a test.

Much of the contents of *A Civic Biology* would be shocking to Americans today. For one thing, notes historian Edward J. Larson, the book was "heavily laced with the scientific racism of the day." Human beings evolved from simple forms of life, with Caucasians being "finally, the highest type of all." Negroes were the lowest.

Like many of the scientists arguing the merits of biological Darwinism, Hunter discussed eugenics (the science of improving the quality of the human race) as hard science. By 1925, the year of the Scopes trial, thirty-five states had passed laws compelling the sexual segregation and sterilization of those regarded as eugenically unfit—those who were retarded, mentally ill, and epileptic.

In his textbook, Hunter casually wrote that "If such people were lower animals, we would probably kill them off to prevent them from spreading. Humanity will not allow this, but we do have the remedy of separating the sexes in asylums or other places and in various ways preventing intermarriage and the possibility of perpetuating such a low and degenerate race."



"We, the jury, find the defendant guilty, but think there's something wrong with the system if that's so."

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William Jennings Bryan, one of the prosecutors in the Scopes trial and a man portrayed as a buffoon in the play *Inherit the Wind*, believed that World War I had in part been caused by Darwinian thinking. Many years before Hitler, Bryan railed about the brutality of eugenics, whose ugly implications were as important as biological Darwinism to the intellectual context of the Scopes trial.

Nonetheless, the facts of the trial itself were simple. A grand jury in Dayton, Tennessee, voted to indict John Scopes for violating a state statute outlawing the teaching of evolution.

Presiding Judge John T. Raulston read both the statute and the entire first chapter of Genesis aloud to the grand jury. He virtually directed an indictment: "If you find that the statute has been thus violated you should indict the guilty party promptly. You will bear in mind that in this investigation you are not interested to inquire into the policy or wisdom of this legislation." In other words, the jury was not to judge the law, only whether Scopes had violated it. So instructed, they returned an indictment before noon. The grand jury's foreman, according to Larson, was a retired mine manager who later told reporters he believed in evolution. Given the judge's charge, the foreman felt he had no choice but to indict Scopes for violating the law.

Raulston moved quickly to put the case before the trial jury. Jury selection took only a few hours. Although flamboyant defense attorney Clarence Darrow was known for taking days to select a jury, he did not bother in this case. His purpose was not to get his client acquitted. Rather, it was to get the case to a federal court while showing the public-at-large the depth of ignorance in Tennessee. Building on Darrow's well-known view that Christianity was a "slave religion," the trial presented an opportunity for the forces of progress and modernism to triumph over fundamentalism and backwardness. Darrow's audience was the world, not the jurors of Dayton.

The trial became a media circus, one of the first. Journalists came from major newspapers here and abroad, and transmitted their stories via radio lines that the judge permitted into the courthouse. The crowds were so great that the judge eventually moved the trial outside to the courthouse lawn. The jury barely sat. Larson estimates that over the week-long trial the jury was in the courtroom for no more than thirty minutes—the time the prosecution took to present its case. As is so often true today, the battle between prosecution and defense was played out not in front of the jury but before the judge, who ruled on the admissibility of evidence and the appropriateness of witnesses. Famous scientists from Harvard and the University of Chicago, who were excluded from the courtroom, testified to throngs of journalists outside that evolution was fundamental to an understanding of science.

Darrow asked the court to instruct the jury to find his client guilty. He did this in part to hold off the possibility of a hung jury, which would have halted his plans to challenge the law's constitutionality in a higher court. Darrow did not ask the jury to consider its other choice—jury nullification, that is, to find the law itself unjust. Nullification would have been a far better outcome for the country.

American juries have a long tradition of nullification, dating back to printer John Peter Zenger's trial in 1735. Zenger had printed an article—whose facts were not contested—criticizing the royal governor's embezzlement. Because English law made criticizing government officials a felony, Zenger was clearly guilty of seditious libel. Arguing that a story could not be libel unless it was false, Zenger's lawyer urged the jury to consider both law and facts. They did, and found Zenger not guilty, setting the precedent for the First Amendment.

In the mid-nineteenth century, however, some American judges began objecting to nullification, particularly by the many Northern juries that refused to convict abolitionists who had helped fugitive slaves. In renowned racial cases, juries were far more likely than judges to be on the side of what we would consider right today. In the Dred Scott case, for example, the jury in the second trial, held in Saint Louis in 1850, concluded that Dred Scott and his family should be free. Scott's former owner appealed all the way to the Supreme Court, and won in a notorious decision that also said Negroes had no rights under the U.S. Constitution.

In 1895, the Supreme Court condemned jury nullification, saying that it is the duty of juries "to take the law from the court and apply that law to the facts as they find them to be from the evidence." This matter is far from settled in practice. Four states (Georgia, Indiana, Maryland, and Oregon) acknowledge jury nullification in their constitutions. Juries across the country refused to convict draft resisters during the Vietnam War. Over the last few years, many juries have refused to convict drug abusers under severe drug laws. In some capital cases, juries have refused to convict when the verdict meant execution.

But most judges try to make sure that juries follow the law—even if the law is foolish or excessive. Is this the best course? The Scopes trial is helpful here.

Most commentators today seem to think that while Scopes was found guilty by the jury, his side somehow won subsequently. In fact, the defense was firmly outmaneuvered. The ACLU's intent had been to take the case to the U.S. Supreme Court. Scopes hired Darrow over the objections of the ACLU, which rightly feared that he would not construct a careful case worthy of the Supreme Court.

Darrow made fun of both the jury and the judge, reiterating that he intended to get the case entirely out of the state and in front of a superior forum. Instead, in 1927, Tennessee's own Supreme Court overruled the trial court on technical grounds, saying the judge erred in imposing the $100 fine without the jury's consent. The court reversed the conviction, eliminated the fine, instructed the attorney general to dismiss the prosecution (*nolle prosequi*), and halted the legal drama. Darrow had nothing to appeal.

The law under which Scopes was prosecuted stood for another forty-two years. Tennessee textbooks were edited to exclude evolution. Worse, according to a study in *Science*

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magazine in 1974, publishers across the nation also expunged Darwin from textbooks, not wanting legal problems to interfere with sales.

The nation and its school children would have been better off had Darrow mounted a full defense and given the jury serious material to consider, enabling them to reflect and rule on the rightness of this particular prosecution under Tennessee law. With such a defense, the jury might have refused to convict, nullifying the law. Or, had the jury still convicted, a full defense might have given the ACLU a legitimate record on which to appeal, perhaps successfully. It would have been ironic, however, had science won its preeminent legal position based on a text most scientists would repudiate today. □

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George W. Grayson

NATO AFTER KOSOVO

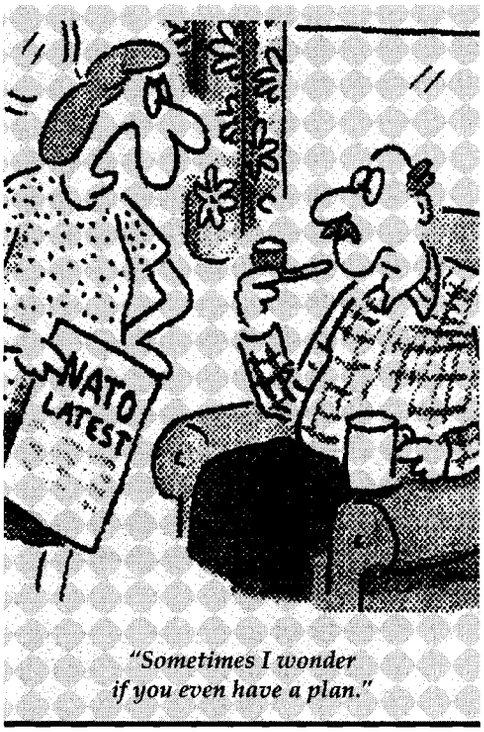
Adjusting the balance of power

The most successful peacekeeping military alliance in history, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), emerged from the seventy-eight-day Kosovo conflict both buoyed by its triumph over Serbia and facing tough questions about its future operations and make-up. Most telling, perhaps, was how a new awareness of the current balance of power made itself felt during the Kosovo engagement. This was true especially in light of the disproportionate military contribution of the United States.

American technological and strategic prowess has heightened awareness in London, Paris, Berlin, and other capitals that the Europeans should play a greater role in ensuring their own security. "The faces of European leaders are as red as beets, for the Americans supplied virtually all the high-tech, razzle-dazzle hardware to wage war on their continent," one U.S. diplomat told me. It is not clear, however, that this new consciousness will crystallize into specific programs. Nor is it clear, for that matter, when, or if, the Clinton administration will abandon its much-criticized *ad hoc* approach to Europe and formulate a long-term strategy. Also clouding the future is whether the recently enlarged alliance will continue to accept new members from Eastern Europe and the Baltics.

Whatever the future holds, NATO's performance in Kosovo deserves praise. Despite acute differences on war aims, tactics, and strategy, the nineteen-member pact held together. Among other welcome developments was that Germany's Social Democratic-Green government dispatched German troops abroad for the first time since World War II, and did so with a public approval rating of 62 percent. Similar worries about the domestic politics of the alliance's newest members—Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic—also proved exaggerated. Poland comported itself as a staunch ally. This was true also, if to a lesser extent, with Hungary, while the Czech Republic allowed NATO to use its airspace, even as it criticized the alliance's actions.

Needless to say, official Washington considers Kosovo a resounding victory, particularly because not a single pilot died in combat. Observers who pooh-poohed the potential of air power are eating humble pie. European policy mavens are now on a similar diet—not so much because of qualms about the air war, but because Uncle Sam dominated every aspect of the fighting. The Americans furnished 65 to 80 percent of the aircraft and precision ordnance unleashed in the initiative, according to analyst Michael Ignatieff. In addition, Washington provided the intelligence capability on which the alliance relied, as well as twenty-four Apache AH-64 helicopters—complemented by a five-thousand-strong Task Force Hawk—which, although never dispatched from Albania, demonstrated a readiness to mount an invasion. Opposition from Washington and several allies aside, General Wesley Clark, the American Supreme Allied Commander in Europe (SACEUR), was reportedly determined to introduce ground forces by late summer had the Serbs not called a halt.



"Sometimes I wonder if you even have a plan."

Even before the Serbian capitulation, Tony Blair, Lionel Jospin, and Gerhard Schröder—respectively, of the United Kingdom, France, and Germany—emphasized the importance of Europe loosening Uncle Sam's apron strings. The alliance's "Defense Capabilities Initiative," signed at NATO's fiftieth anniversary summit in April, warned that "potential threats to alliance security are more likely to result from regional conflicts, ethnic strife, or other crises beyond alliance territory, as well as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery." The document recommended "common approaches" to doctrine, training, and operational procedures.

Several factors militate against the

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Europeans' transforming such lofty rhetoric into actual policy. Economic limitations are first on the list. Tax increases for military preparedness are out of the question in countries that now devote 47 to 57 percent of their GDPs to government programs. Spending on social programs for aging populations will invariably trump revitalizing the armed forces. In fact, soon after the Serbian exodus from Kosovo, both the French and German governments announced substantial cuts in military outlays. These reductions will only widen the gap between technologically sophisticated U.S. forces and their European counterparts. The idea of converting Europe's lower-paid, albeit expensive-to-train, conscript armies into lean, mean professional machines is equally daunting.

Yet another financial obstacle to military modernization is that the Europeans are bearing—at Washington's insistence—the brunt of the peacekeeping and reconstruction costs in Kosovo. Eighty-five percent of the peacekeepers, who will eventually number fifty thousand men and women, will be Europeans. Although the bill is to be shared among thirty countries, such expenditures—$7.5 billion for rehabilitation alone—dim prospects that the Europeans will significantly reconfigure their militaries.

But small steps forward are possible. The U.K.'s extraordinarily intelligent, self-deprecating, and diplomatic defense secretary, George Robertson, will replace the astute Spaniard Javier Solana as NATO's secretary general. "Robertson's terrific," said Europe-watcher Peter Bird Swiers. "He's pro-American, pro-Europe, and promodernization." Solana will remain in Brussels as the European Union's military and foreign-policy czar. In this position, he will be able to work with Robertson to encourage the Europeans to devise their own "defense identity," while preserving NATO's transatlantic character.

The Clinton administration's weaknesses, especially its preference for short-term fixes over grand designs in international affairs, also introduce a note of uncertainty into NATO's future. This was especially evident in the way in which General Clark's term was shortened as SACEUR in July. Clark frequently crossed swords with Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He wanted to "go downtown" on the first night of hostilities, striking at Belgrade's electricity, telephone, command-and-control sites, and Slobodan Milosevic's bunker. His remarks at an April 27 news conference ignited reports that, if air combat failed, he would favor the dispatch of ground troops—a proposal that caused heartburn in the risk-averse White House and Pentagon.

And in early June, Clark had given an order to block the Russian seizure of the Pristina airport. That order was opposed by Washington and London and countermanded by NATO. Cohen got even with Clark by preemptively abbreviating Clark's tour while the general was on an official visit to Lithuania. This bit of highly personal politics deprives NATO of badly needed continuity in the aftermath of the fighting, while also leaving the impression that Washington prefers "yes men." The ham-handed removal of Clark sparked concerns that the United States would diminish its involvement in Europe and gave further impetus to the notion that Washington was committed to fighting wars from the air without risking troops on the ground.

Despite NATO's success against Serbia, a reliance on pricey laser-guided ordnance and other Buck Rogers devices has several troubling consequences. It allows Milosevic-style ethnic cleansing to proceed, it further widens the chasm between the high-tech U.S. military and conventional European armed forces, and it advances the fiction that professional soldiers can achieve their objectives by pressing buttons from afar rather than directly engaging the enemy. As noted by Edward N. Luttwak, such a reliance on modern technology offers the illusion of a kind of postheroic war, fought without casualties or much sacrifice. No military alliance can be built on such ephemeral foundations.

All of these concerns will be exacerbated should NATO expand. Had the alliance unraveled or lost in Kosovo, the chances of adding new nations would have been slight. But on balance, NATO's new members proved to be useful additions. Still, the likelihood of further enlargement before the 2002 NATO conclave appears unlikely. The political dust from Kosovo must settle. Moreover, no reason exists to gratuitously offend Russia on the eve of the Russian and American presidential elections. While the plan to compensate Moscow for dismantling weapons of mass destruction survived the Kosovo hostilities, initiatives like Y2K cooperation and the NATO-Russia Joint Permanent Council will have to be rejuvenated. Still, France is already plumping for the admission of Romania, Italy for Slovenia, and Poland for Lithuania. Meanwhile, Baltic-Americans have a full-court press on in the U.S. Senate. Even Bulgaria is seeking to integrate itself into the alliance, as was made clear by its refusal (along with Romania and Hungary) to authorize Moscow to fly over its territory to reinforce the two hundred Russian military at the Pristina airport.

President Bill Clinton is leaving the question of new NATO members to his successor. The magnified influence of East European and Baltic ethnic lobbies in states rich with electoral votes guarantees that U.S. presidential hopefuls will not slam the door on any potential member. In the meantime, sharpened tensions between China and Taiwan or Korea and Japan or the bloodbath in East Timor could shift America's focus away from Europe. Still, the next U.S. chief executive—who will take office just fifteen months before the 2002 NATO summit—may seek to establish his foreign policy *bona fides* by backing alliance expansion. Any such advocacy should spring not from interest-group politics at home, but from an explicit geostrategic rationale that augments the security of the United States and its NATO allies. □

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I WAS A TEEN-AGE ATHEIST

Memoirs of a naughty Catholic girlhood

Anita Mathias

Flames leaped into the horizon. My parents, my sister, Shalini, and I abandoned our dinner to race up to the terrace and watch the blaze. It was Holi, the Hindu spring festival, an explosion of mischief celebrating the god Krishna's shenanigans with the cowgirls. Flung water balloons gushed vermilion; water pistols squirted indigo. Stranger smeared stranger with silver paint stolen from construction sites. Buckets—dishwater? urine?—were emptied from high apartment windows onto passersby. Riotousness and devilry burst forth, a ripe sore.

Durga, our tiny, curly-haired cook, cycled into town and returned, panting with news. A procession of Hindus, chanting *bhajans*, statues of Shiva, god of destruction, hoisted on their shoulders, had marched past the mosque and forced a pig into it. Rumors of Muslim vengeance for this desecration flew round the town. "I won't tell you in front of the *chhota memsahibs*," Durga said. The Hindus retaliated. Jamshedpur, my North Indian home town, was 82 percent Hindu and 11 percent Muslim. The fire engines were silent as Muslim slums, homes, and businesses burned.

Mesmerized by the flames zigzagging into the horizon, I sat on the parapet, my legs dangling over the edge. In the boredom of boarding school, I had read of front-page disasters wistfully—hurricanes, earthquakes, landslides, floods, war. But nothing happened, except in the movies. I was seventeen and had just graduated from Saint Mary's Convent, Nainital, a century-old boarding school in the Himalayas run by German and Irish nuns—staid, staid.

I gazed down: fire devouring houses, crashing rafters, distant screaming. The effect was hypnotic, as in a cinema rustling with peanut-crunching, betel-nut chewing, enthralled throngs. But these were not sound effects—I snapped out of reverie—these were real people, just like me, burning to death. Suddenly sickened, I ran downstairs and locked myself in my room.

The police slapped a curfew on the town: A glare, a curse, a flung stone could spark a riot. Police stood at every street corner, their rifles cocked. The market shut down. Home deliveries of bread and milk stopped. The cook sifted out insects to make *parathas* from old whole wheat flour. It was romantic in a way, the *Indian Family Robinson*.

The Hindu-Muslim riots held little personal terror: I was Roman Catholic. My forebears from Mangalore on the west coast of India were converted in the mid-sixteenth century by Portuguese missionaries, backed by the Inquisition. It was the prospect of boredom that bothered me. At the first hint of violence, libraries closed their stacks as too-easy targets for arsonists. Though we lived in faculty housing on the campus of Xavier Labor Relations Institute, a business school run by American Jesuits at which my father taught, it was impossible to get books. How would I get through curfew without them? A compulsive reader, I went through our bookshelves: *Jane Eyre, Wuthering Heights*, I had read them several times. I shrank from rereading *The Return of the Native, Far from the Madding Crowd*, or *The Mill on the Floss*, though I loved those "classics."

I settled down with the books I had not already read: Christian books. My father bought them at parish jumble sales as though there were virtue in the purchase. He never read them. To my surprise, I was fascinated. *The Cross and the Switchblade*, David Wilkerson's tale of Christ's radiance transforming young gangsters and drug addicts in New York City, and Catherine Marshall's *Beyond Ourselves* were vivid accounts of Christ bursting into everyday life, setting it to music, making it sweet. This felt very different from the fossilized Catholicism forced on us at boarding school.

Anita Mathias *lives in Williamsburg, Virginia. She won a 1998 National Endowment for the Arts fellowship to work on* Wandering in Two Worlds, *a memoir of her Catholic girlhood in India.*

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My childhood had been totally immersed in Catholicism— saints, angels, rosaries, novenas, litanies. It was punctuated with those rituals—baptism, first confession, first Communion, confirmation—that can so entwine themselves with the fabric of your spirit that to slough off Catholicism is to shiver in uncertainty. It's like stripping off your skin. As a child, I unquestioningly accepted Catholicism, and believed what I was taught; that it was the only true faith. *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*: Outside the church, there is no salvation.

When I was eleven, I read through a compendium of *General Knowledge* during the winter school holiday and discovered a new passion: Greek mythology. I abandoned my stamp and postcard collections to read everything I could find on the enchanted universe of Greek gods and goddesses. Then, I chanced upon an idea that shattered my religious complacency.

I read that primitive men and women, often devastated by nature, imagined it was God. They worshiped the sun as Apollo; corn, fickle in blight or plenty, was Ceres; the raging sea, they imagined, was the mighty god Poseidon; the north wind, Boreas. Flabbergasted mortals elevated the forces of erratic, uncontrollable nature into gods to adore and placate. I understood. And was Catholicism any different from this awe-struck, foolish approach to nature? I doubted it.

I became an atheist and fed off the secret knowledge of intellectual superiority. How benighted they were, these parents, grandparents, priests, and nuns who ran our boarding school—they and their rattling rosary beads and boring Masses, their sprinklings of holy water from Lourdes, their relics, holy pictures, apparitions of the Virgin, prayers both to and for any good soul that left this earth. Just eleven, I knew better. I whispered to cronies, "I am an atheist," as one might confide, "I am a murderess."

Sister Hermine, our stern-faced, square-jawed German principal, summoned her rebellious charges to her office and, from her lowest desk drawer, slowly drew forth her strap—a thick strip of leather. She rarely had to use it. At the mere sight, the victim whimpered in terror and repentance. I was the only girl she had ever strapped, Sister Hermine often said, shaking her head. When I was sent to the principal's office to apologize for calling Miss Fernandes—a teacher who had maliciously and unfairly punished me—a Gorgon and a bitch, I clarified "No, I didn't call her a bitch. I said a witch," which seemed worse. Since I refused to recant (I meant what I'd said) I was struck on the calves with the strap and let off apologizing. Sister Hermine was ambivalent about breaking her students' wills. "What's the merit in taming lambs?" my father's brother, Theo Mathias, a Jesuit, asked her when she was close to expelling me. "But if you get a lion cub, and tame it into a lamb, isn't that something to be proud of?" Sister Hermine agreed.

Still, she would be unimpressed by an eleven-year-old atheist, I thought. Outwardly, I went through enforced Catholicism—daily Mass; Benediction: a cascade of hymns every Sunday evening; adoration: silent prayer before the Blessed Sacrament every first Sunday; confession, rosary, stations of the cross, and choir practices. Inwardly, I scoffed, and as the habit of confidence grew, I rebelled. I got my friends to join me in crawling out of the choir room while Sister Cecilia, behind the organ, warbled in a holy dream. I embedded the altar candles at Mass with the sulfurous heads of match sticks, reducing the girls who strained to catch the hiss, the sputter, the odor, to convulsive giggles.

When I turned fourteen—no longer one of the "babies," or the "middle set," but a "big girl," especially in my own estimation—I knocked on Sister Hermine's door and announced that I did not believe in Catholicism, or in God for that matter, so please, please, could I not *have* to be a Catholic, and—especially—not *have* to go to church?

"I'd much rather join the non-Catholics at 'silent occupation,'" I protested. The Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs were allowed to read, study, paint, or embroider, provided they sat at their desks in perfect silence—oh, oasis!—while we, we went to church.

"Can't I just obey the Ten Commandments and not go to church?" I asked.

She was amused. "What are the Ten Commandments?"

I rattled them off from years of catechism, but stumbled over "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife." "See, you can't even say the Ten Commandments. How can you obey the Ten Commandments?" Sister Hermine laughed. "You have to be a Catholic now. Wait until you are twenty-one. Then decide."

And that was that. I got no support from my parents for my desire to officially "lapse." They detested adverse attention. You are a Catholic, my mother said, whether you like it or not. Seven years to go.

I became openly defiant. As president of the debating club, I chose subjects like "God is dead," and "religion is the opiate of the people," speaking for the motion, annoying the nuns. My favorite writers were Matthew Arnold and Thomas Hardy. (I was not aware that doubt had a more modern face.) I embraced Hardy's bleak Learian vision—"As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods; they kill us for their sport"—his absent or malign god.

Still, the vanishing of God left a vacuum which was filled by restlessness, unhappiness, and puzzlement about the purpose of life. Like Ivan in *The Brothers Karamazov*, I concluded that if there was no God, there was also no immutable moral law, nothing intrinsically right or wrong. There was no one to reward goodness or punish wrongdoing in this world, and there was no world to come. So one could do whatever one wanted or, at least, whatever one could get away with.

I shared my new philosophy with my friends. We formed a gang, "the bandits," and our first exploit was our daily raids on Modern Store which catered to rich kids from the four expensive boarding schools in Nainital, and to the tourists and honeymooners who swamped the Himalayan resort. Kaye, Savneet, Bella, and I strolled into the store

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wearing the baggy sweaters of our convent uniform, designed to disguise nubile figures. We stuffed Cadbury's chocolate, Mills and Boon romances, stickers, cards, nail polish, and costume jewelry into our sleeves and up our sweaters. When our desks overflowed, the nuns noticed, made inquiries, then pounced on us. We were marched back to the shop with our booty and forced to apologize: "We are sorry, 'Mr. Modern.'"

Furious, I debated with my class teacher, the fiery, Irish Sister Josephine, through a long summer evening. Perched on a piano in the music room (a sacrilege), I argued that if "Mr. Modern" overcharged us all year, it was okay to even things occasionally by "swacking" from him. Her beautiful brown eyes kindled. "The Bible says..." she began. But I did not believe the Bible was "the Word of God," indisputable.

But at the same time—secretly—I began to crave a moral framework. How easy choice can be when there are absolutes, a road map through the maze of decisions. How wearying to thrash out the morality of every case, every time, all by yourself. I wished I could believe.

"You are experiencing an Augustinian restlessness," Sister Josephine said, quoting the saint: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you." Pascal, she said, wrote of the "God-shaped vacuum" only God could fill. And I was God-bitten. Atheism is closer to faith than indifference is.

I was nicknamed "the naughtiest girl in school" after an Enid Blyton heroine. But being a rebel wasn't really fun despite its jaunty aura. If I could have been "good," I would have. When the nuns predicted a conversion experience for me, I feared it. I wanted it. Their naughtiest girls often become the "holiest," they claimed. For was not Saint Augustine a rake, and Saint Francis a playboy, and, as for Saint Mary Magdalen...?

When we were to be confirmed, I was eleven. Sister Magdalene, an enormous, squint-eyed British nun, persuaded me to take her name. "Mary Magdalen was a notorious sinner who became very holy. Take her name, and she will ask God to give you the grace of a great conversion," she said. The old story—flamboyant rebellion later swinging to passionate devotion. I did not ask "Maggie" why she compared me to a supposed prostitute, harbor to seven demons. I composed scandalous poems about the nuns: "Sister Secunda eloped with a *gunda*," a bandit. I ran away from school with Micky, the school sheepdog. In revenge for being sent out of class, I locked my teacher and classmates into the classroom throughout an afternoon. Such things were surely wicked. But too awkward, alas, too "nice," to refuse Sister Magdalene, I became Anita Mary Magdalene Mathias, adopting that stodgy, dated name I hated. The classic coming-to-faith trajectory had its appeal. I wondered if the "Mary Magdalen" might prove prophetic. Would I suddenly turn "good," perhaps even, in a blaze of glory, become "a great saint"?

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I might convert like Paul. A bullet of hatred, galloping to Damascus to kill and destroy, he is struck off his horse and glimpses divinity. "Saul, Saul, it is hard for you to kick against the goad." "Who are you, Lord?" "I am Jesus whom you persecute." His life acquires a purpose: "the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus Christ, my Lord." "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain," he writes. How wonderful, I thought, to convert just like that, your life transformed—but I lacked both belief and an object of devotion.

Father Clement Campos and Father Ivo Fernandes, handsome Redemptorist priests with twangy-voiced charm, preached our annual retreats: an aesthetic delight, days of hymns and silences, resounding oratory, and prayer by candlelight led by a luscious male voice. And every year we, who from March to December rarely saw a man except the chaplain, developed monstrous, predictable crushes.

"And is anyone here an atheist?" the priest asked provocatively on the first retreat evening as he polled our group of Catholics, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists—and atheists. And every year, I raised my hand.

For the next week, they worked on me—private conferences and counseling, private prayers for healing from whatever trauma brought me, a Catholic girl of good family, to this strange pass. A foot away from the man's animated brown eyes, how easy conversion seemed; how it would please this appealing priest.

"Get up at 5 A.M. tomorrow," the priest said, "and sit alone. Watch the sun rise on those snow-tipped mountains and ask yourself, 'Could this grandeur come to be by accident?'" So I raised my eyes to the Himalayas, waiting to be surprised by faith. Gazing up at the mountains, I thought, as I was expected to—"Maybe, maybe...." But back down in the valley, any belief born of eloquence and hormones left with the good-looking priest.

"Why must you bounce from one extreme to another?" [my father] asked. "You've always found it impossible to conform. In the convent, 'It's yours not to reason why.' It will be a life of exhausting manual work. Mother Teresa recruits simple women from the villages and you're an intellectual snob. You'll have nothing in common with them. Your mind will atrophy. You will be bored!"

Still, I was fertile soil at seventeen as I read the Bible while confined to the house during those Hindu-Muslim riots. On the patio where I sat reading, the sun, a ball of vermilion fire, sank beneath the emerald fortress of trees, lit by the orange-crimson flowers of the Flame of the Forest and the red and yellow Royal Poinciana. I continued reading after dusk by the glow of a kerosene lamp. Was Jesus Christ who the New Testament claimed he was: the God who made and loves us, the creator of the universe, cornerstone and crux of human history, the zigzag of the jigsaw that makes sense of everything else?

Paul says, "He is the image of the invisible God. All things were created by him and for him... and in him all things hold together."

And Jesus asked them, "Who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the son of the Living God. "

Who do you say that I am? Who do you say that I am? Driven by an inchoate hunger, I read and reread the New Testament, my thirst growing even as it was quenched. Gradually, my cherished objections—the lack of scientific proof; the myth-like aspects of virgin birth and a Christ resurrected from the dead; that Christianity was the credulity of fishermen given form and credibility by Paul's sophisticated intellect—crumbled like clay gods. No, this was not mythology. It differed from the tales of Mount Kailash, Mount Olympus, and Asgard that I had devoured. It differed in the sense of, well, holiness. It had the taste of truth. Jesus' words sang in me like music, like poetry. I found myself praying, "Lord, I believe. Help thou my unbelief."

I gradually surrendered the intellectual high ground of cold reason: What I do not see with my eyes, or feel with my hands, I will not believe. I could not spar against the Christ I apprehended dimly—I who did not understand cars, or logarithms, or tides, or love. It's possible the Gospels are true, I conceded. It's plausible. Intellect can bring you to the brink of belief. Faith is the missing link. I believed: in a leap of the heart as rationally inexplicable as the leap from affection to love. For like love, faith is the heart's knowledge. "Lord," I prayed. "I believe. You are the living God. I will follow you, wherever you lead. I will do your will insofar as you make it clear to me what it is." I did not quail at this largesse, this scattering of blank checks. I did not add, "but be merciful, Lord. Be sensible." With an air of adventure, of rusty doors wrenched from their sockets, revealing fresh vistas, I prayed: "Show me, Lord. What should I do?"

I would dedicate my life to Christ, I decided. How then should I live? "A life of love!" How exactly, I did not know, but, being seventeen, I wanted to do something dramatic and do it swiftly. "I want to be a pen in God's hands," I wrote in my journal, "picked up and used, leaving light where I have written."

My first impulse, to fly off from Jamshedpur to help David Wilkerson of *The Cross and the Switchblade* in his work with teen drug addicts and gangsters in Harlem, wasn't exactly

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practical. While casting about for a vocation, I volunteered in the Cheshire Home for physically handicapped and mentally retarded children, on the outskirts of Jamshedpur. Here, in the postage stamp of my world, I tried to practice the kindness at the heart of Christianity, without which words are noisy gongs, ardor and alms worth little. I lived with the Vincent de Paul nuns and was captivated by their life of prayer, quiet work, and silences. "How beautiful this serene life is, governed by the pealing of bells," I wrote in my journal. "Scaling inward mountains—lovelier by far than a life of distraction, worries, gossip, and moneymaking, a life inimical to the spirit."

Catholic children brought up by nuns or priests brace themselves against a vocation: a tap on the shoulder, inward marching orders, an imperative you can ignore, but at the cost of your soul. At some time, we all think we've caught it: That's it, we are the chosen of God, chosen for a lonely, lovely way, another bride of Christ.

Now, I began, obsessively, to wonder if I had a religious vocation. God was the only thing that was real, I kept reminding myself, and all else—college, marriage, career, social life, money—was vanity. I wanted to find a way to live, always, close to Christ, tasting his joy and peace. Surely leaving "the world," becoming a nun, was the only way to do that.

While at the Cheshire Home, I read Edward Le Joly's *Servant of Love* about Mother Teresa's congregation, the Missionaries of Charity. How utterly radical they were in their following of Christ, I thought, as I read of their austere life, stripped down to essentials. They owned but two saris, a Bible, and no more than could fit into a bucket—their "suitcase" when they traveled. How seductive to slough off everything, to live deep in the embrace of Christ, the creator of the universe, friend sufficient for every need. Wow! Without training, with impetuosity, they plunged into all manner of human misery, their reach widening year by year, their mandate simply to serve "the poorest of the poor," defined broadly: lepers in Yemen, shut-ins in Melbourne, crazed drug addicts in New York, freezing homeless people in London, orphans in Peru, tramps near the Vatican, the dying destitute in Calcutta. The energy of it all and, unconsciously, I guess, the prospect of adventure dazzled me. They did just what Christ commanded, I thought, impressed: I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was sick and you looked after me. Whatsoever you do to the least of my brethren, that you do unto me. I felt an inner push, a shove toward this congregation, so literal in its imitation of Christ.

In a burst of headstrong lucidity, I sloughed off the destiny my parents had mapped for me: college, followed by (an arranged) marriage. No, I would become a Missionary of Charity. I would help those unable to help themselves. I would feed constantly off the light and joy of Jesus. The notion glowed.

Minutes after I'd returned from the Cheshire Home, full of bright decision, I announced it to my parents. I left the room swiftly as I saw my father's face freeze. My mother followed me. "Go and see your father." The muscles of his face worked. There were tears on his cheeks. "Why must you bounce from one extreme to another?" he asked. "You've always found it impossible to conform. In the convent, 'It's yours not to reason why.' It will be a life of exhausting manual work. Mother Teresa recruits simple women from the villages and you're an intellectual snob. You'll have nothing in common with them. Your mind will atrophy. You will be bored!

"However, if you are sure that God is calling you to this..." he acquiesced eventually. "But go slow. Be sure. Wait." Wait! "I will not wait," I said. "I will call them today. I have heard my vocation."

I left for the convent that August, feeling, with the naiveté of late adolescence, holier already, as if the Christian's life task of "being conformed to the image of Christ" could be accomplished in a dramatic grab for holiness, and showy, though worthy, doing would speed the slow, almost imperceptible process of transformation called sanctification. I grew. I grew through the next two years, through the aspirancy, postulancy, and novitiate. I grew through work in the orphanage, with the mentally retarded and the dying destitute; through prayer and Scripture study; through friendships and conflicts and the "testing of vocations," and through the tears and humiliation. And I grew through sickness and exhaustion that never let up, and eventually made the whole enterprise untenable, and which, after I left, was diagnosed as tuberculosis.

I left the convent sadly, with a sense of falling off, to study English as an undergraduate at Oxford University, to go to graduate school in creative writing in America, and later to forge myself into a writer and a faculty wife in suburban America—the less poetic path. I still see Christ as the wisdom that created the universe. I still see following him as the sanest way to live, a way I am committed to. The Christian imperatives which Jesus with his Gordian-knot-slashing directness reduced to two—to love God mightily and to love your neighbor as yourself—remain the same. There is just more distraction. The traditional monastic disciplines—prayer, meditation, adoration, the beautiful liturgy of the hours, and "spiritual reading"—served to draw one's thoughts back to Christ, the breadth and depth of his love, and his enabling grace. It now takes ingenuity to carve for myself a circle of silence to feed on Scripture and the transforming presence of Christ it houses, and to live contemplatively, mindful of Jesus not only amid the beauty and tranquillity of my garden, my writing, and my books, but amid a child's cries and crankiness, the crucible of marriage, and the haste and busyness which haunts America as poverty haunts India. Nurturing two young children, creating a loving family life, running a peaceful household—the demands to give of oneself are constant, without the convent's periodic sanctioned escape into the sacred ivory spaces of psalmody and song. In fact, I now consider domesticity, marriage, and motherhood a smithy in which the soul can be forged as painfully, as beautifully, as amid the splendid virginal solitudes of the convent. □

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DOWRY DEATHS IN INDIA

'Let only your corpse come out of that house'

Paul Mandelbaum

On the outskirts of Delhi, in the shadow of the famed Qutab Minar tower, lies the village of Saidulajab. Through its narrow rutted dirt alleyways, a local resident takes me to the home of his onetime neighbor, Manju Singh. It is there that he heard her cries of agony on July 10, 1996.

Enacting an elaborate pantomime, Manju's neighbor indicates, by pointing to the browned leaves of a backyard plant, the spot where he found her and from which he took her, in the back of his bicycle rickshaw, to a local clinic.

The next day, lying in South Delhi's Safdarjung Hospital with burns covering nearly her entire body, the twenty-seven-year-old regained consciousness long enough to tell a local police officer that her husband and in-laws had threatened to beat her the previous afternoon, haranguing her yet again over the inadequacy of her dowry. As she tried to escape—so alleges the police report—her husband and brother-in-law caught hold of her while her mother-in-law doused her with kerosene; then Manju's husband struck the match that would eventually kill her.

Manju's case is one of an alleged six thousand "dowry deaths" a year in India. The term typically refers to a newly-wed bride who, upon moving into her husband's family home, is harassed over the goods and cash she brought to the marriage, leading to her murder or suicide. Antidowry activists claim the actual death toll is much higher, and the British journal *Orbit* recently put the annual figure at fifteen thousand.

Twenty years ago, India's feminist leadership began sounding the alarm. Responding to a groundswell of pressure from women's groups and the media, in the mid-1980s India's Parliament passed sweeping amendments to the largely moribund Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961, as well as the Indian Evidence Act and the penal code. The new laws acknowledged a quasi-manslaughter crime called "dowry death," and placed the burden of proof on the accused in any situation where a bride dies unnaturally during the first seven years of marriage, if a history of dowry harassment can be shown. In the ensuing years, the violence seems only to have escalated.

As late as 1987, high concentrations of dowry-death cases were mostly confined to the corridor connecting Punjab, traditionally a very patriarchal and violent part of northwest India, to Delhi and, further east, Uttar Pradesh. But by the mid-1990s, significant per-capita concentrations of dowry death had infested half of India's thirty-two states and union territories.

Often the conflicts are not so much about material goods *per se* as about the family status such items represent. Sometimes, dowry conflicts may mask other underlying problems—infidelity, sexual incompatibility, for example—that are unthinkably intimate for many families to acknowledge and discuss.

In most cases of dowry death, the physical evidence is murky. Often a bride's death is staged to look like an accident—hence the popularity of burning. Fire can obscure a variety of incriminating details, and the cheap kerosene stoves to which many Indian wives are virtually chained often do explode, providing offenders with a plausible scenario.

In the days before kerosene stoves, writes historian Veena Talwar Oldenburg, Indian brides fell down wells with suspicious regularity. Oldenburg has traced some of the roots of India's dowry problems to the British Raj and the economic pressures imposed by its agricultural tax system, which in turn pitted Indian farmers against one another. The parents of sons, according to Oldenburg, capitalized on the urgency felt by the parents of daughters to arrange a marriage by an acceptably early age. This urgency fueled a climate of extortion. Other cultural observers speculate that such a climate may have arrived earlier, when Hindu parents felt anxiety about protecting their daughters' honor from Muslim invaders.

In any case, modern-day dowry came to corrupt two ancient Hindu customs associated with arranged marriage. The

Paul Mandelbaum's *journalism has appeared in the* New York Times Magazine *and elsewhere. He is currently completing a novel about marriage set partly in India, for which he has received a 1999 James Michener/Copernicus Society of America fellowship.*

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first, *kanyadan*, called for enhancing the virgin bride with an array of jewels. The second, *stridhan*, provided the bride with a premortem inheritance from her parents. These two concepts merged and have mutated into a type of groom-price, now practiced not only by Hindus but also by some of their Muslim neighbors. Even some tribal groups who until recently preferred the inverse custom of bride-price have switched.

Today, Indian brides and their families feel compelled to buy their way into a marriage alliance with "gifts" of cash, jewels, and consumer goods for the in-laws' pleasure. This "marriage settlement" is often calculated in direct relationship to a groom's prospects. Grooms working for the elite Indian Administrative Service can sometimes command dowries equivalent to $100,000 or more. Indian grooms living in the United States seek compensation not only for their own self-perceived worth but for providing access to the American dream. In many cases, dowry is seen by both parties as an acknowledgment of the groom's desirability.

Manju Singh's parents felt obliged to present a significant endowment, even though she held a bachelor's degree from Delhi University while her fiancé was a village shopkeeper. Her father, Nawab Singh, has a thirty-one-item list of the bounty he gave, including 70,000 rupees (close to one year's salary), a scooter, a color TV, 224 grams of gold jewelry, 2 kilograms of silver, bedroom furnishings, and thirty-five suits of clothes for the groom's side. Several months after the wedding, he says, Manju's in-laws demanded a washing machine, a refrigerator, and 50,000 rupees. "So many things," the school teacher recalls for me harriedly over his lunch break. "I tried to give as much as I could." Nonetheless, he alleges, Manju's in-laws began to harass and beat her in a spiral of domestic violence leading to her death. "She was burned by them purposely for dowry," says Nawab Singh.

Even if the last quarter of the twentieth century did not create dowry death, several intersecting social and economic trends seem to have escalated the problem. For one, availability of a host of household appliances, as well as their increasing promotion on television have created a hunger among the lower-middle class and others who lack the purchasing power to afford what they are being encouraged to desire. The families of grooms have seized an opportunity, through negotiation of the customary premarital settlements, to acquire some of these items through dowry, leaving it to the bride's family to worry about the bills. At the same time, some brides' families have been doing quite well, so well that they might wish to hide surpluses of hard currency from the tax authorities. They have seen dowry as a means to invest that money under the table and to secure their daughters a place in higher-status families. Ultimately, these two forms of dowry inflation have increased the likelihood that more and more brides' families will have a harder time fulfilling the terms of the marriage

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settlements they feel obliged to enter into, setting the stage for dire consequences.

The transience of the modern world has also put other pressures on arranged marriage. In the small southern town of Bangarapet, a village elder recalls for me the dowry negotiation he mediated on behalf of a local family. The prospective groom's father, visiting from New York, objected strenuously to the offer of three *lakhs*, or roughly $8,500, on the following grounds: "What do you think of me? What do you know about my status? I know the president of America. I know the president of India. What will be the state of my prestige if I collect three *lakhs* from you?"

While most Indian marriages are still made by parents as a way of ensuring a suitable match within an appropriate range of subcastes, as more Indians move from the countryside to teeming cities or abroad in pursuit of opportunity, chances have grown that a bride would marry into a family geographically removed from and previously unknown to her own parents.

Increasingly, today's marriage alliances are made blindly through brokers, classified ads, and Internet services. When it was time to marry off his twenty-nine-year-old daughter Sangeeta, who had completed her Ph.D. in solid-state physics, Bimal Agarwal of Kanpur started replying to ads in the *Sunday Times of India*. Turning to the June 27, 1993, classified section, he found one looking for a "beautiful educated match" for a "Kanpur-based handsome boy 29/173/5000 employed leading industrial house only son of senior business executive with own residence...."

Agarwal telephoned the father of this twenty-nine-year-old businessman earning 5,000 rupees per month, and over the next four days the families met several times to negotiate marriage expenditures. On July 1, Sangeeta was engaged.

As her father and I converse on his apartment balcony, I am distracted by the anachronism of a laser eye-surgery center located across a narrow dirt street crowded with sleeping pigs. A passing woman carries atop her head the dried cow chips commonly used for cooking fires. When I get around to asking Mr. Agarwal if his daughter's engagement was decided hastily, he assures me it was quite typical.

Problems, however, began at the wedding itself, when, alleges Agarwal, the groom's family demanded a car. He adds that the ensuing pressure became a nightmare for Sangeeta. One day, roughly five months after her wedding, she and her father met for lunch. "She was weeping," he recalls. "She said, 'Father, go and talk to those people.'" But he had recently tried that, he says, and was reluctant to intervene again so soon.

Two days later, Sangeeta was found dead from "asphyxiation as a result of hanging," according to a postmortem report.

Her husband, Sanjay Goel, points out for me the ceiling fan in his family's middle-class living room. He maintains that Sangeeta committed suicide not because of any dowry demands but possibly because she had no desire to marry him in the first place.

Sangeeta's father, however, alleges that not only did dowry play a role in her death, but that she was murdered. The courts have yet to settle the case. Whatever the outcome, it seems fair to say that Sangeeta Goel, like many Indian women today, was burdened with the worst of two worlds: the marriage mandate of tradition combined with the compassionless anonymity of modern-day life.

Meanwhile, the day-to-day struggles fall to a handful of privately run women's shelters. One of the best known, Shakti Shalini, was formed thirteen years ago by mothers who were grieving for their lost daughters and who wanted to offer a haven to endangered brides. Shakti Shalini also gives counseling sessions designed to restore such troubled marriages, a service not appreciated by everyone.

"They're taking too much of a chance with somebody's life," charges Himendra Thakur, who heads the International Society against Dowry and Bride-Burning in India, an organization he runs from his home in Salem, Massachusetts. "They feel very good when they send somebody back. They think they're saving a home," says Thakur, who maintains that at the first sign of dowry harassment, "the marriage should be dissolved."

But this stance has met great resistance in India. Speaking before a Kanpur civic organization in order to pitch his dream of building a series of "residential training centers" for abused brides, Thakur is confronted by an elderly man in the front row, who stands up and demands, "What about divorce?" This strikes me as an absurd question: How could divorce conceivably approach the tragedy of dowry death? But in the mind of this gentleman and many others in India, divorce is viewed with an alarm difficult to appreciate in the United States.

In general, Hindus face a spiritual imperative to marry and remain married, with nothing less than the salvation of their forebears at stake. Furthermore, the ancient Laws of Manu enjoin a wife to suffer her husband's trespasses (thus, most marital breakdowns are viewed as the wife's fault). Such traditions serve to keep many Indian wives married, even when their safety is in danger.

As indicated by the traditional Hindu parting to a newly wed daughter ("We are sending your bridal palanquin today. Let only your corpse come out of that house."), Hindu parents have long stressed that a married daughter should refrain from returning home. A bride's parents may be especially reluctant to allow her back if there are still maiden sisters whose chances of marrying might be hurt by the reputation of coming from a "difficult" family. Sadly, this reluctance has hardened in recent years, according to Delhi University sociology professor Veena Das. "There is something that has become pathological in India," she asserts. Typically in the case of dowry death, one thing is very shocking: "The girl has gone to her parents repeatedly and says she wants to come back, but the parents refuse to take responsibility for her." □

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Love in a time of Alzheimer's

Iris and Her Friends
A Memoir of Memory and Desire
John Bayley
Saint Martin's Press, $22.95, pp. 256

Margaret O'Brien Steinfels

Just a year ago, John Bayley's *Elegy for Iris* (Saint Martin's Press) appeared. He recounted, in that small volume, the story of his marriage to Iris Murdoch, the English novelist and philosopher, who was then suffering from Alzheimer's. The memoir—an elegant and poignant account of their life together including the increasingly difficult recent years when Bayley cared for Murdoch at home—was at heart her story and the story of their marriage. Bayley found that the marriage to which each had entered somewhat gingerly was *in extremis* "now getting somewhere."

Iris Murdoch died last February; and here is an equally small volume about the couple's last year together, really about Bayley's last year with a lost soul. *Iris and Her Friends* focuses not so much on Murdoch or their marriage or their friends, but on Bayley and his seemingly unlimited capacity to deal patiently with a wife become a willful, and at times demonic, infant. Murdoch had literally lost her self; her memory gone, her ability to be calmed and cared for was radically diminished. All of this could have been a caregiver's nightmare—and at times it seems to have been.

By way of surviving the difficult and frustrating final months, Bayley turned to daydreaming, dreams, and journal keeping. More practically, after Murdoch had been put to bed, he enjoyed a sacrosanct cocktail hour, a quiet supper, and late-night TV. It is the record of these reveries and small pleasures that makes up *Iris and Her Friends*. In his daytime reveries, which spill over into his dreams, and which he reflects on in his journal, Bayley revisits his childhood: the real one and the one he imagined while the real one was going on; his English boy school days, his undistinguished army service, and after the war an oddly comic courtship of a German *fräulein*, recently a member of the female branch of the Hitler Youth. What is true? What wholly the work of imagination? Is there a difference? In one surrealistic encounter, Bayley and Elias Canetti, an early rival for Murdoch's affection, agree to exchange wives; Bayley's wife, here named Priscilla, and Canetti's wife, Iris, will each become the wife of the other. This imagined exchange occurs as Bayley and Murdoch are driving home in the dark from a funeral in which Bayley has made a fool of himself giving the eulogy and Murdoch fools of them both by her childish behavior.

Has Bayley himself gone daft? There are moments when the reader wonders. In fact, by snatching time to live so vividly an alternative life in his own imagination, he is able to live through the utter breakdown and chaos of daily life with Murdoch.

Of course, there are moments of anger, and even looming violence. He declares himself at one point to be on the verge of a breakdown: "Suddenly I started crying in earnest, gulping and hiccuping, with my mouth gaping open." More remarkably there are endurance, bemusement, and an almost catatonic forbearance toward Murdoch's mindless (literally) and exasperating behavior. Though she may have lost her self, Bayley does not lose her or the sense of reality that constituted their life together.

It is Bayley's forbearance and almost infinite patience that are so striking and give the story its luminous sense of generosity. Holding on to an Iris, a wife without identity or memory, is both heroic and touchingly maternal. Maternal and heroic, I think, in the sense in which Bayley's countryman, the pediatrician and child analyst D.W. Winicott, spoke of "the ordinary good mother," or "the good enough mother," not min-

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imizing the task of care giving but emphasizing how capable most of us are of caring for those who are or are become helpless. And so Bayley proves himself a "good enough mother."

In the course of the drive home from the funeral, Murdoch throws herself from the car; Bayley stops and frantically begins running down the hill they have been winding up: "Down the road again, a few steps farther on, and the shadow of the hedge lifted: there was a long gap in it. I plunged through and immediately lost my footing. I found myself rolling down a steep grassy slope. As I picked myself up, breathless, I found Iris was beside me. She was lying on her back and laughing, quite unhurt. After jumping out of the car, she must have fallen down the slope, just as I had done, and landed up safe at the bottom like a little puffball. Her face now was just visible in the gloom.

"I started to kiss the face, and I started laughing, too, as we embraced each other." □

Margaret O'Brien Steinfels *is the editor of* Commonweal; *her review of* Elegy for Iris *appeared in the issue of February 12, 1999.*

A METAPHOR GONE WILD

Jesus Symbol of God
Roger Haight
Orbis, $44, 505 pp.

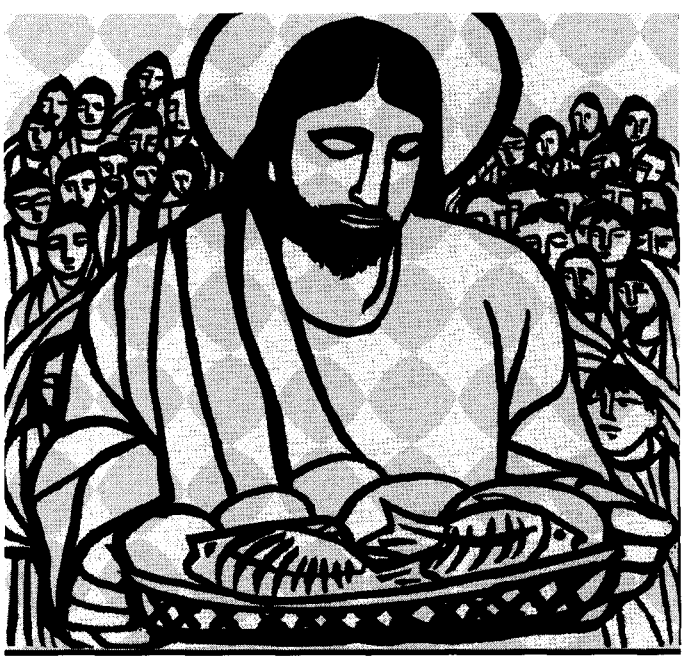
John Cavadini

Roger Haight's massive new Christology aims to articulate Christian doctrine "apologetically," defending its credibility to a postmodern age. He calls for a thoroughgoing Christology "from below," constructed on the basis of experience, not authority. "Experience" here includes both the Christian experience of salvation through Christ, and the specifically postmodern character of all contemporary human experience, which among other things forecloses answers to religious questions that appear mythological or which fail to regard religious pluralism not only as a given but as a positive value.

To accomplish his aim, Haight turns to the category of symbol. God's transcendence is such that experience of God is never immediate, but always mediated through historical objects or agents, concrete symbols of God. This approach eliminates any question of mythology, since God does not appear or intervene directly in history. At the same time it allows other religions to possess symbols which mediate equally true experiences of the true God. Jesus is thus the "central symbol" of God for Christians, though only "one of many symbolic actualizations of God's loving presence to humankind."

More specifically, it is Jesus of Nazareth, not the Christ of post-Resurrection faith, who is the central symbol in question. Haight means the historical Jesus located behind the Gospel portraits, accessible to all apart from religious authority through historical research: the Jesus in whose public ministry crowds encountered God's healing and salvation. The Resurrection of Jesus and doctrinal claims presupposing Resurrection faith are "decentered." For Haight, the doctrine of the Trinity is itself a symbol radically dependent on Christian experience of Jesus of Nazareth. This dependence precludes any doctrine of the preexistence and incarnation of a hypostatized Logos, while other Trinitarian titles (Holy Spirit, Wisdom, Father, Son) are no longer names of hypostasized persons but rather metaphors for the one God's being or activity.

Haight's sensitive discernment of the state of the question persuasively suggests that the development of a Christology responsive to postmodernity may draw heavily upon a theory of symbol. Surely he is right to remind us that Christologies aiming at fidelity to traditional authoritative formulations must also remain firmly anchored in the Jesus whose preaching and deeds of wonder reclaimed the poor and the marginalized. Christologies which begin "from above," starting with the formulations of councils and other authorities, risk neglecting the public ministry of Jesus, potentially distancing Christians from the uncomfortable truths Jesus spoke. Haight is right to stress such cautions. Still, distinctions between Christology from below and from above are easily exaggerated if "Christian experience" is opposed too starkly to authoritative pronouncements. Church dogma and doctrine are themselves attempts to articulate Christian experience. There is no small irony in surrendering the univer-



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sal tradition of the church as the starting point for the discernment of "Christian experience" only to yield it to a handful of scholarly historical critics whose work (valuable in itself) is accessible to a relative few and whose conclusions have been notoriously contested and unstable over the past century.

More generally, the language of symbol, rightly prominent in contemporary theology, is pressed to the limit when it comes to Christian claims about Jesus. If the central importance of Jesus is that "for Christians, Jesus is the concrete symbol of God," then no matter how sincerely the author protests he does not mean "merely" a symbol—that symbols are distinguished from mere "signs" because symbols not only stand for something but truly reveal and make present what they symbolize—when it comes to calling Jesus a "symbol" of God, many Christians will worry: Is that all? Merely a symbol? If a symbol is "something that mediates something other than itself," if a symbol "makes present something else," to call Jesus a "symbol" is to rule out any way of saying that "Jesus *is* God," since a symbol by definition mediates *something else*. No matter how effective and full the mediation, God is one thing and Jesus another. A principle of separation is strongly encoded into Haight's Christology, much more strongly than any corresponding principle of Christological unity. Even if Jesus makes God absolutely and fully present, he does it not as God, but precisely as someone other than God.

If Jesus is merely a symbol, and Christianity merely a symbol system with Jesus as the "primary hermeneutic principle," the interreligious dialogue Haight prizes does become easier. But perhaps it is easier only because all religions are reduced to a least common denominator as symbol systems, regardless of whether other religions are in fact essentially similar or amenable to such reduction. Exchange is easier once there is a medium of exchange ("symbols"), but an analysis which permits exchange only in Western currency is a species of religious imperialism all the more insidious for being unintentional. In any event, with Haight's Christology, would there really be a need for dialogue? *Anyone* can affirm that "Jesus is the central symbol of God for Christians." "Symbol" may be the "interdisciplinary category" enabling Haight to render Christian faith "intelligible to educated people at the beginning of the third millennium, those both inside and outside the church"; but there is a difference between rendering Christian faith intelligible to a culture and reducing its central theological claim to a statement that even an atheist can affirm. If theology becomes merely a description of one particular symbol system among many, it will scarcely be possible to distinguish theology as "faith seeking understanding" from a history-of-religions methodology that retains nothing distinctively Christian except as tautology: "Jesus is symbol of God *for Christians*." And despite the respect properly shown to the experience of non-Christians, it is worrying that the experience of millions of Christians who venerate

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These Heights

On Everest, beneath my blanket tent,
I shook my Ray-O-Vac if it went out;
palmed the lens when I heard my parents shout
upstairs, again, "Lights out!" Then from a vent,
cigarette smoke and their low talk's ascent
through heating duct, murmurous as my doubt
that a radio's call, now fading out,
could reach that col where their bottled air was spent.

These days, my mother trails a plastic hose
to breathe in emphysema's altitudes.
She learned to flip it like a climber's rope,
and, by one, mount the stairs, rest, as if snows
fell around her, and, in slow lassitude,
dulled the glittering rise of what she hopes.

Kevin Cantwell

Mary as *Theotokos* ("Mother of God," a title central in classical Christological debate) is quietly set aside (admittedly, "Mary, Mother of the Symbol of God" would be cumbersome).

Haight's analysis of the symbolic is finally too minimal to support his massive reliance on this category. For example, he offers no consideration of what it means to apply the same category to both persons and inanimate objects. If symbols derive their significance from their mediation of a transcendent value by definition not their own, to call persons symbols is potentially instrumentalizing. In Jesus' case, at least as mediator (in traditional formulations), he does not mediate an experience of someone or something other than himself. Haight offers no analysis of the relation between symbolization and mediation. Are all mediations symbolic, even if all symbols mediate? To say Jesus is a mediated presence of God is not necessarily the same as saying he is symbolic. Perhaps Jesus' mediatorship could revise our understanding of what symbols are and do.

Haight persuasively insists that antique inculturations of the faith must be transposed into contemporary idioms if they are to be received and understood. But these previous inculturations did not simply fit Christian faith into preexisting philosophical categories of Greco-Roman culture while the categories themselves (such as "being" and "becoming") remained completely intact. Shouldn't the story of the Word Incarnate cause Christians to question received categories of experience as too narrow, old wineskins which must be burst in order to re-vision the world in faith, refashion experience itself in gratitude for a God who accepted in Christ the vagaries and vulnerabilities of historical existence as his own? Who became our "companion in death" (Augustine)? Who was sold for thirty pieces of silver (Nazianzus)? A transient with nowhere to lay his head though he is the Creator (Clare and Luther)? Whose very transcendence is not appreciated apart from these acts of identification and love? Origen faulted Celsus for holding too preconceived a sense of what God could or could not do. In deference to Platonic categories, Celsus dismissed the wonder of wonders, that the immutable and ineffable Being who created the universe could somehow become a little baby and cry, could bleed and die ignominiously. Origen used Platonic categories even as he stretched and challenged their ability to describe the wonder of God's love in Christ. As for the doctrine of the Trinity, shouldn't it dispose us (following Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine) more toward stretching the limitations of current epistemologies than toward accepting them so uncritically that the doctrine itself is deconstructed in order to conform to them? Haight's reduction of all Christian claims to the symbolic never questions the adequacy of the postmodern category "symbol" itself to render an account of God's love in Christ.

Ultimately, uncritical use of the category of symbol really means that impoverished or exaggerated notions of divine transcendence go without critique. Haight's God is so transcendent as to seem impersonal and irrelevant. Does God really disdain participation in our sad realities, so transcendent that solidarity with our death is out of the question? Too transcendent ever to be "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" (Bernard of Clairvaux), the spouse who has given up all, even life, for the beloved (Hildegard, Bonaventure), and not merely symbolically but at a specific time and place? If God is reluctant or unable to feel the crucifixion of human existence in flesh and blood of God's own; if postmodern theology, unlike the theologies of the past, can find no way to articulate an "understanding" of this faith which at the same time eschews mythology (in keeping with classical attempts), then, speaking for myself, I see little reason to remain a Christian or a theologian. If Jesus is merely a symbol, I have no burning reason to invest the time and energy it takes to pass this faith on to children, or to spread the Word to others when other symbols (even the Roman emperor?) serve just as well. I see no particularly urgent reason to take up my cross and follow a symbol (or even to teach for one). *Pace* Roger Haight, and to paraphrase Flannery O'Connor, "If Jesus is merely a symbol, I say, the hell with it." □

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STILL IN THE RED

Kapitalizm
Russia's Struggle to Free Its Economy
Rose Brady
Yale University Press, $30, 289 pp.

Russia under Western Eyes
From the Bronze Horseman to the Lenin Mausoleum
Martin Malia
Harvard University Press/Belknap, $35, 514 pp.

Susan McWilliams

Russia today is floundering. The "reforms" begun eight years ago have failed to bring stability, far from prosperity, and Russian citizens are fighting to survive amid vastly devalued currency, employers who don't pay wages, a nonexistent social net, money-laundering schemes abroad, and terrorist acts at home. Former Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, the one Russian politico who seemed likely to subdue the crisis, got his walking papers last summer and has formed an opposition party. President Boris Yeltsin, still in questionable health and coming to the end of his term, is butting heads with a hostile parliament.

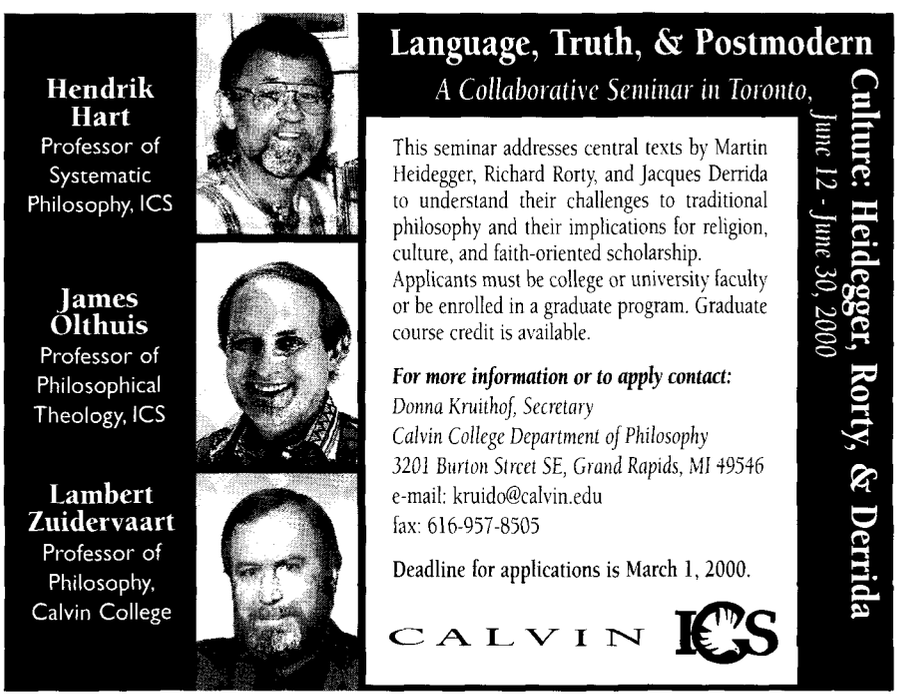
From the Western perspective, Russia's disarray is disheartening. A few years ago, Russian reformers promised that their privatization push would soon bestow the gifts of market capitalism on citizens and investors alike. It would be a painful transition, they warned, but swift. The West—led by U.S. economists who helped engineer the reforms and the Clinton administration's resolute support—accepted this scenario. Now, as Russia's stores and factories empty once again, we must wonder what went wrong.

Rose Brady, Moscow bureau chief for *Business Week* magazine from 1989 to 1993, explains the immediate roots of this turmoil in *Kapitalizm*. Through interviews with both winners and losers in Russia's new capitalism, Brady constructs an absorbing story of Russia's reform attempts from 1991 to 1998. Hers is a sweeping saga, describing the political and personal travails of a country in transition. Most valuable, perhaps, is her in-depth coverage of the Vladimir Tractor Factory, which in its turbulent privatization serves as a microcosm for the whole nation. Vladimir's workers-turned-shareholders objected to placing competition over "deep personal contacts," electing to keep a Communist boss and resisting capitalist realities. Soon, after a stint of continued production without corresponding demand, the factory's resources disappeared, and a Harvard-educated director came in. But despite his ambition, Vladimir's new director struggled: Shoddy bookkeeping and poor planning had left the company $4 million in debt; half-finished tractors rusted on the assembly line while unneeded parts clogged warehouses; and Russia's massive interest rates prevented refinancing. With no market supports in place (such as worker protections, the promise of government bailout, or even an established banking system), Vladimir's director had to fire or give "extended vacations" to the majority of employees, impoverishing the factory-dependent community.

Brady has a talent for personalizing the plot, for bringing large issues down to their day-to-day operations, and she makes the crucial point that Russian capitalism, with its roots unavoidably set in Soviet soil, is a unique proposition—not at all identical to Western economic systems. (Hence, *Kapitalizm*.)

Brady's limitation, however, comes from the very same love of Russians and Russianness that allows her to chronicle the country so well. Her prognosis for the coming years, which she admits is rooted in sympathy for the reformers, may be unduly roseate. Even after describing the difficult tensions that plague Russia's political life, Brady, in her words, "still hoped for the liberal alternative." That hope obscures, at times, the distinct possibility that Russia may turn back the clock.

Brady's story can be filled out, to a certain extent, by the themes in *Russia under Western Eyes*, Martin Malia's attempt to make sense of the relationship between Russia and the West. As Malia, professor emeritus of history at Berkeley, points out, Russia's place in the Western mind is inherently subjective. We tend to view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Russia with romantic eyes, as either emerging hero or despotic villain. Time and again, Western thinkers have dramatized the turns of top-level Russian ideology and neglected empirical ambiguities.

In fact, as Malia's book illustrates, the West's current disillusionment with Russian reforms is not unfamiliar. In the first half of the eighteenth century, Russia came into favor with European *philosophes*, who idealized Peter the Great, Catherine, and their efforts to convert Russia into a "civilized" Western model. In a way that is eerily similar to recent celebrations, Westerners vaunted Russia's transformations on a fundamentally superficial level, ignoring the serfs, the corruption, the complexities. Inevitably, this kind of simplistic view, focused on the doings in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, withers when confronted with the sheer size, diversity, and entrenched beliefs of the Russian people. And it can only lead to disappointment.

It has been Russia's fate to suffer when people try to apply, more or less directly, ideologies or political institutions that are not appropriate to the nation. Just as it was inadvisable to apply Marxism, a Western European industrial theory, to a fundamentally agricultural society, it was inadvisable to apply capitalism to a country with a seventy-year Communist history. What has been created in Russia today is an oddly Marxist-tinged form of capitalism, which emphasizes economics as primary. It neglects the fact that capitalism has succeeded only in countries which have very elaborate political systems that support, and contend with, market forces.

Russia's condition, then and now, speaks to the ludicrous belief in the capacity of doctrine, bolstered by shock and terror, to transform a place. When Yeltsin announced that "shock therapy" would reconstruct Russia in a matter of months, he was doing what Peter and the Bolsheviks had done before: insisting that a philosophy can be imposed through formal means, that ways of thinking can change quickly and unilaterally. (As Brady aptly notes, although Russia's reformers modeled their shock therapy on Poland's similar and triumphant effort, their task was inherently more troublesome. Not only was Russia's economy larger and more heavily dominated by the state, but Russia also lacked the strong political consensus for change that Poland enjoyed.) In fact, faced with this lack of unanimity, Yeltsin's men couldn't even implement their proposals; opponents persuaded them to forgo plans—among them, a value-added tax and a liberalization of energy prices—that would have preserved the government's budget.

When I lived in Nizhni Novgorod in 1994, the difficulties of such ideological "reforms" were apparent. Though Nizhni has had a comparatively successful experience with local privatization, and its officials speak knowledgeably of market systems, the local children attended a camp where signs still exhorted "Young Pioneers" to join the proletarian cause, and shrines to Lenin dotted the local factories. The only group that didn't seem ambivalent about capitalism was organized crime, whose members paraded through the streets, unchecked, in Reebok jogging suits. Although the atmosphere was undoubtedly more liberal than when I visited the Soviet Union three years earlier, it was apparent that changes in Russia would be slow and tedious, especially while citizens were losing their retirement savings along with their sense of order.

It is hard to believe that Russia will ever approximate Western society without overhauling its judicial and social forms. But, as Brady and Malia both conclude, the scenario is not impossible. Today, as Russia lies again on the verge of economic and political collapse, Bill Clinton and other Western leaders would do well to offer support. Despite all its high-level problems, Russia is showing signs of change at the most important level of the (for lack of a better word) proletariat. Citizens speak more comfortably in free-market terminology, and, although most think Yeltsin is done for, many have come to support Primakov or other reformers.

For better or for worse, the West helped Russia plunge toward a free-market democracy, and now is not the time to abandon our best hopes. Russia and the West were wrong in some initial assumptions, but that does not mean failure. Russia cannot continue to survive daily shocks; it needs the promise of rest. Unfortunately, that rest will not come easily, and even the hardiest reformers cannot promise it on their own. □

Susan McWilliams, *a recent graduate of Amherst College, works as a consultant in New York City.*

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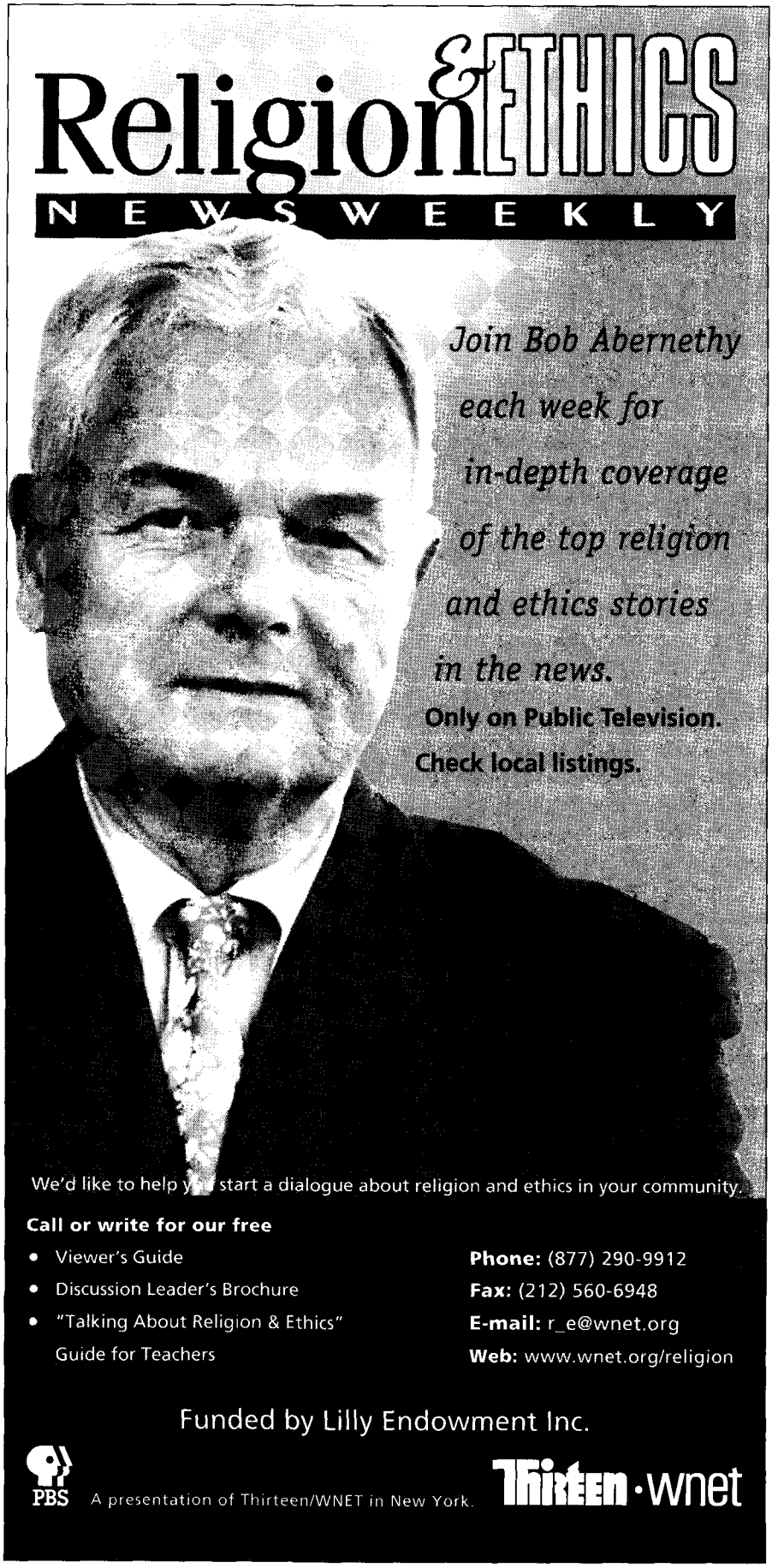
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REALLY BAD IDEAS

God's Funeral
A. N. Wilson
W. W. Norton, $25, 385 pp.

Edward T. Oakes

As our rapidly elapsing century draws to its close, many commentators are trying to guess how future historians will eventually characterize it. But we can all guess at least this much: whatever else they may say, no doubt later generations will judge the twentieth century to have been uniquely bloody. Just as past centuries came to be called the Age of the Enlightenment, the Age of Faith, etc., so too the twentieth century will one day, I suspect, be known as the Century of Blood.

But perhaps later generations will also notice how thoroughly *derivative* have been the ideas for which all this blood has been shed. Wars in this century have characteristically been wars of ideology, rarely wars of pure national interest, as they once were in the days of Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin (although a Catholic cardinal in the French Court, Richelieu allied France with Protestant Germany and Sweden —even with the Muslim Ottomans!—against Catholic Austria in the Thirty Years War). But our wars were different: As the word "ideology" implies, they were born out of a passion for ideas (*Fire in the Minds of Men* is the title of a history of Marxism by the former Librarian of Congress, James Billington, but it could easily summarize the political frenzy of the entire century).

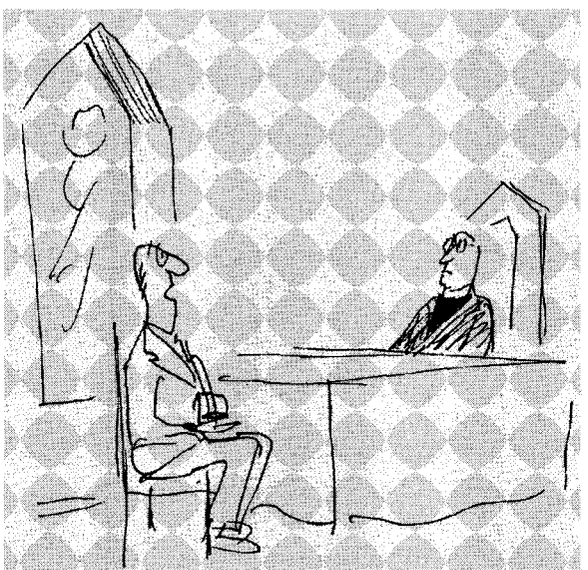
But what also remains striking, at least with the advantage of hindsight, about these ideologies is how much they were all carry overs from the nineteenth century. Nearly every idea that has animated the politics and passions of our century was conceived or brought to birth in the nineteenth century: fascism, communism, psychoanalysis, anticolonialism, socialism, protest atheism, feminism, evolution, utilitarian ethics, behaviorism; nearly every idea fueling the passions of the century was hatched during the reign of Queen Victoria. Among all the ideas that have constituted the drama of this century, only *laissez-faire* capitalism and the idea of universal rights have come to us from the eighteenth century, and none from the twentieth!

Seen in that light (and again with the advantage of hindsight), one also cannot but notice how stale and jejune the legacy of the nineteenth century has become: With the exception of feminism and evolution, which will doubtless remain permanent features of the next century, none of the rest of the threadbare vestments in the Victorian trousseau shows much promise of lasting very long into the new millennium. What Solzhenitsyn has done for Marx, Frederick Crews has done for Freud, Noam Chomsky for behaviorism, and Alasdair MacIntyre for utilitarianism. Indeed, one might even regard the twentieth century as the laboratory, so to speak, in which the human race tried out, tested, and found wanting the ideas conceived in the rather distractable brain of the Victorian intellect—and, as the blood of our century proves, the experiment has blown up in humanity's face.

In *God's Funeral*, A. N. Wilson has undertaken to describe the ebbing away, to use Matthew Arnold's phrase, of the "sea of faith" throughout the nineteenth century; but, except for a few momentary concessions, he weaves his tale with little sense for how problematic the Victorian legacy has become. Certainly the author is well read, and he knows how to cull out of his authors a telling quote to summarize both the writer's personality and his central thesis. (I particularly liked William James's description of Hegel's universe: "Its necessity, with no possibilities; its relations, with no subjects, make me feel as if I had to live in a large seaside boarding house with no private bedroom in which I might take refuge from the society of the place.")

But hovering over the whole effort, like Poe's raven or the vultures of some apocalyptic dystopia, death speaks its rebuke. What reader of a work praising the "Masterpiece Theater" atmospherics of Victorian intellectual culture can forget the killing fields and abattoirs of the twentieth century, the battlefields of Passchendaele and the Marne, the ovens of Auschwitz and Treblinka, the Gulags of Siberia, the Golgothas of Cambodia and Rwanda?

True, in the chapter on Marx, Wilson notes how Marx's errors directly and easily led to the very horrors we are now trying so desperately to escape (the NATO-led war in Yugoslavia aptly encapsulates that desperation). But no sooner has he finished showing how nearly every "scientific" prediction of Marx has been refuted by history than Wilson knights Sir Karl with this royal sword of approval: "No doubt these things have to be said in the interests of



"Does God 'beep'? I keep getting a 'beep beep.'"

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truth, but in a sense they miss the point of why [Marx and Engels] were destined to be incomparably the most important political prophets [!] of the last century." When the French political philosopher Raymond Aron called Marxism the "opiate of the intellectuals," he spoke more truly than he knew, for even after the collapse of communism, one can detect traces of the opium den in Wilson.

If this were not problem enough, the author also pays little attention to how much, when seen on their own terms, the positions of the writers he has chosen for treatment contradict each other. One reads potted summaries, all following hard upon one another, of Kant, Carlyle, Mill, the luminaries of the Oxford Movement, George Eliot, Herbert Spencer, Darwin, Arnold, Huxley, Swinburne, William James, and, finally near the finish line, the Catholic Modernists. Of course in a book of this size and scope, the reader must be content with a thumbnail sketch of each writer; sometimes the portrait is successful, more often it fails to get beyond the level of the anecdotal. But when all these chapters jostle each other in a book of this size, the reader quickly notices how, in this cacophony of conflicting world views, some sort of adjudication on the part of the author is required—but never provided.

I do not mean to say that Wilson never speaks *in propria persona*; indeed, like a liberal Paul Johnson writing for the *Manchester Guardian*, he freely dispenses his opinions (anyone associated with the Oxford Movement is a "bigot," Stalin could have learned his interrogation techniques at the Vatican, and so forth; the tedium of these opinions no doubt being partly a function of their sheer predictability). But prescinding from the fact that only the truly devout come in for this kind of treatment, his editorial problems really begin only when the time comes for him to dispense approval: You cannot indiscriminately salute Spencer, Arnold, William James, and the Catholic Modernists without prompting the reader to wonder how all these ideas could ever begin to cohere in one system.

While reading this book I happened by chance to be reading Dostoevski's novelistic screed against liberalism, *The*

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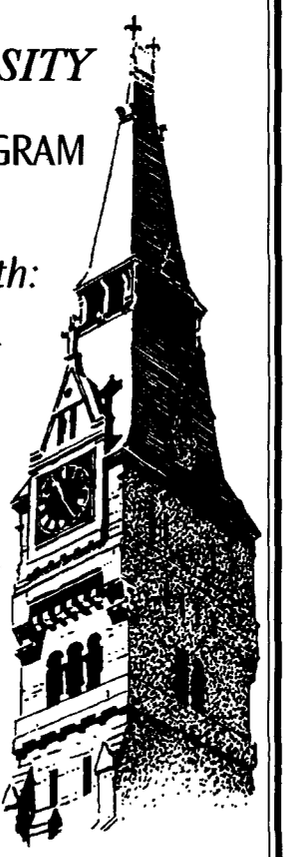

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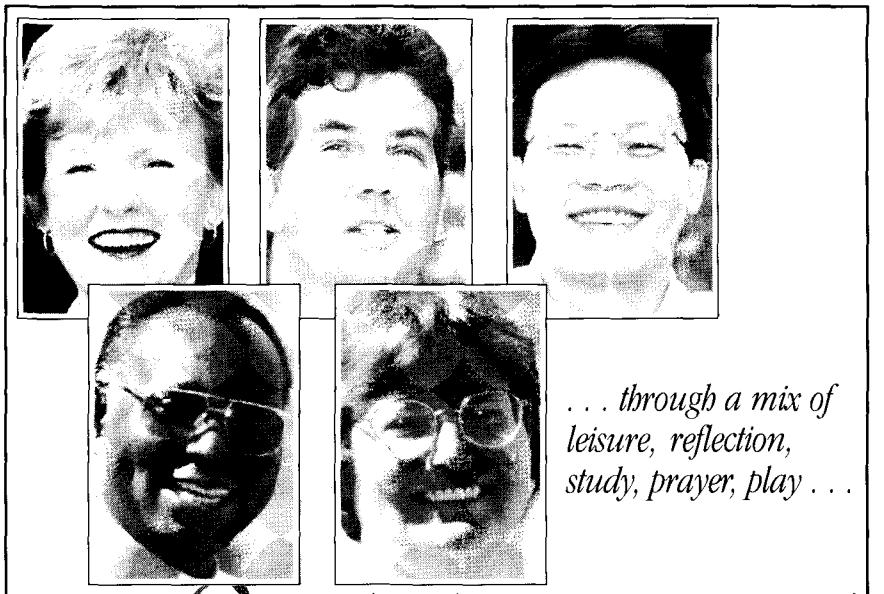
Devils. "Let the nihilists and the Westerners howl and call me a reactionary!" he wrote a friend after he had started work on the novel: "To hell with them!" Needless to say, in his slapdash treatment of the man who can perhaps claim to be the greatest novelist of the human race, Wilson rises to the bait and abuses Dostoevski in just those terms. But even more oddly, the author (trained as a literary critic!) scarcely engages the novelist at all. Indeed, one sign of the unsatisfying approach of this book can be gleaned from the telling fact that Spencer and Swinburne get a chapter each, but none is devoted to either Dostoevski or Nietzsche, both of whom defy the potted-summary mode adopted by this superficial assemblage of disconnected essays, essentially a work of journeyman scholarship by a literary journalist. □

Edward T. Oakes, S.J., *teaches in the religious studies department at Regis University in Denver, Colorado.*



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(Continued from page 4)

Sullivan's death in 1978. A customer could not phone or enter the store without recognizing (and anticipating) the intelligence and acuity (sometimes acerbity) that Butler and her colleagues, Kay Voss and Kevin Curley, brought to queries, comments, and vague searches for the "right" book.

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Let the historians so note.

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GARDENING FOR LIFE

Susette M. Talarico

In February 1998, I was diagnosed with recurring breast cancer. It had been seven years since I first had, and then supposedly overcame, the disease, so the news came as a shock to me, my husband, Rodger, and our teen-age son, Robert. Struggling to deal with this reality, Rodger and I considered a variety of coping strategies.

Since, as it happened, the diagnosis arrived just before Ash Wednesday, we decided we would "give up cancer for Lent." The radiation treatments started immediately, so that my daily trips to the hospital became my Lenten discipline. Awareness of the renewed struggle with cancer became our Easter Vigil. Because Holy Week coincided with the completion of radiation therapy, it wasn't hard to enter into the Paschal mystery, to celebrate the glories of life in the season of resurrection and renewal.

Things changed in the weeks after Easter, when I entered into chemotherapy treatment. Radiation had left me only a little tired; chemotherapy brought nausea, real fatigue, loss of hair: stark reminders that I was really and truly ill. Hoping to deal with my spiritual malaise as well as the physical symptoms, I spoke with my pastor and good friend, Porter Taylor. Rodger and I had shared the news of recurrence with him on the day of diagnosis. There are only two fundamental truths, he said then: God is good and life is fragile. Now I asked him directly what spiritual exercise he would suggest to help me cope with the effects of chemotherapy. Without hesitation he said, "Plant a garden."

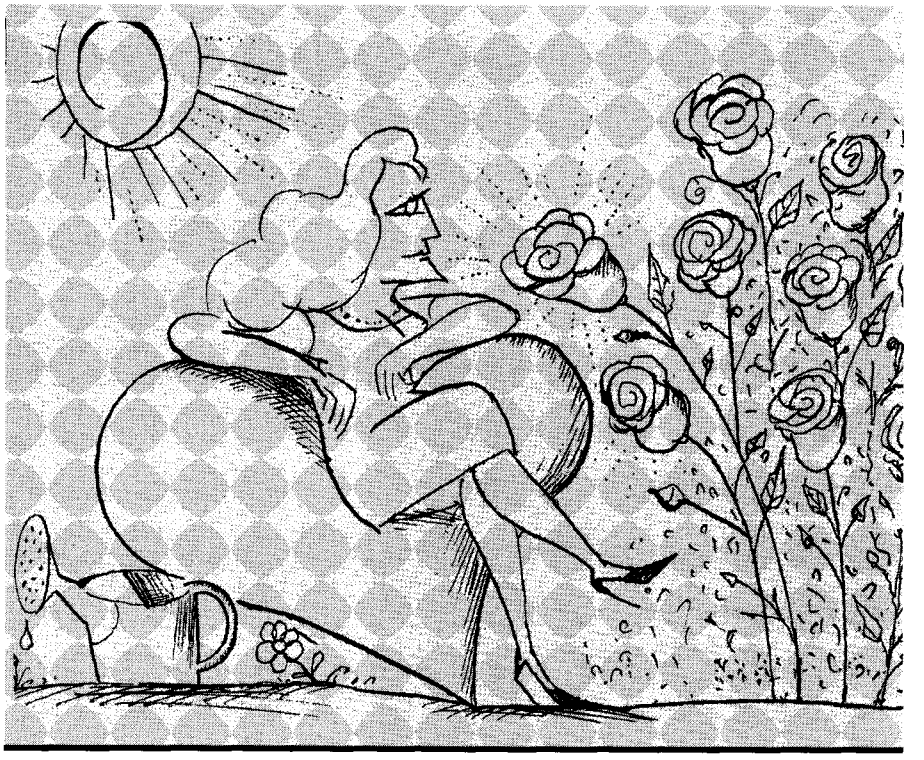
Now, I have never been one to garden. Rodger has often enough poked fun at his Yankee wife's ignorance of the ways of soil. In the early years of our marriage I had dallied with plantings, with no success; when I became pregnant I told my husband we could have a baby or squash but not both. So Porter Taylor's counsel was unexpected—and not particularly welcome.

On reflection, though, and knowing that I wasn't up for more formal prayer, I decided that maybe after all a flower garden was in order. But not one that called for digging and weeding (I lacked energy); instead, I would plant in pots that could live on our deck. Sharon Shouse, a good green-thumbed friend, helped me choose several varieties of flowering plants. And they actually did flower, whereupon I added other plants and soon had a fragrant and festive refuge. Picking up on the idea, Rodger and Robert attacked the clay-ridden soil around our mailbox and planted a bed of flowers.

Well, it worked. The chemotherapy went on for months; during all that time I never failed to be soothed by the flowers around the mailbox and on my garden deck. The butterflies that congregated added to the solace, especially in the immediate aftermath of individual treatments. Resting outdoors and luxuriating in my garden became my chemotherapy prayer.

The treatments ended some months ago. The fatigue is gone, my hair has returned, I feel quite well. The doctors say I have "no measurable disease"—a way of reminding me that, as before, the cancer could return. My flowers, symbols of the light and grace that sustain all living things, continue to nourish. Tending them is still an important part of my daily prayer, reminding me that God is good and that life, though fragile, is precious. □

Susette M. Talarico *is a professor in the department of political science, the University of Georgia.*



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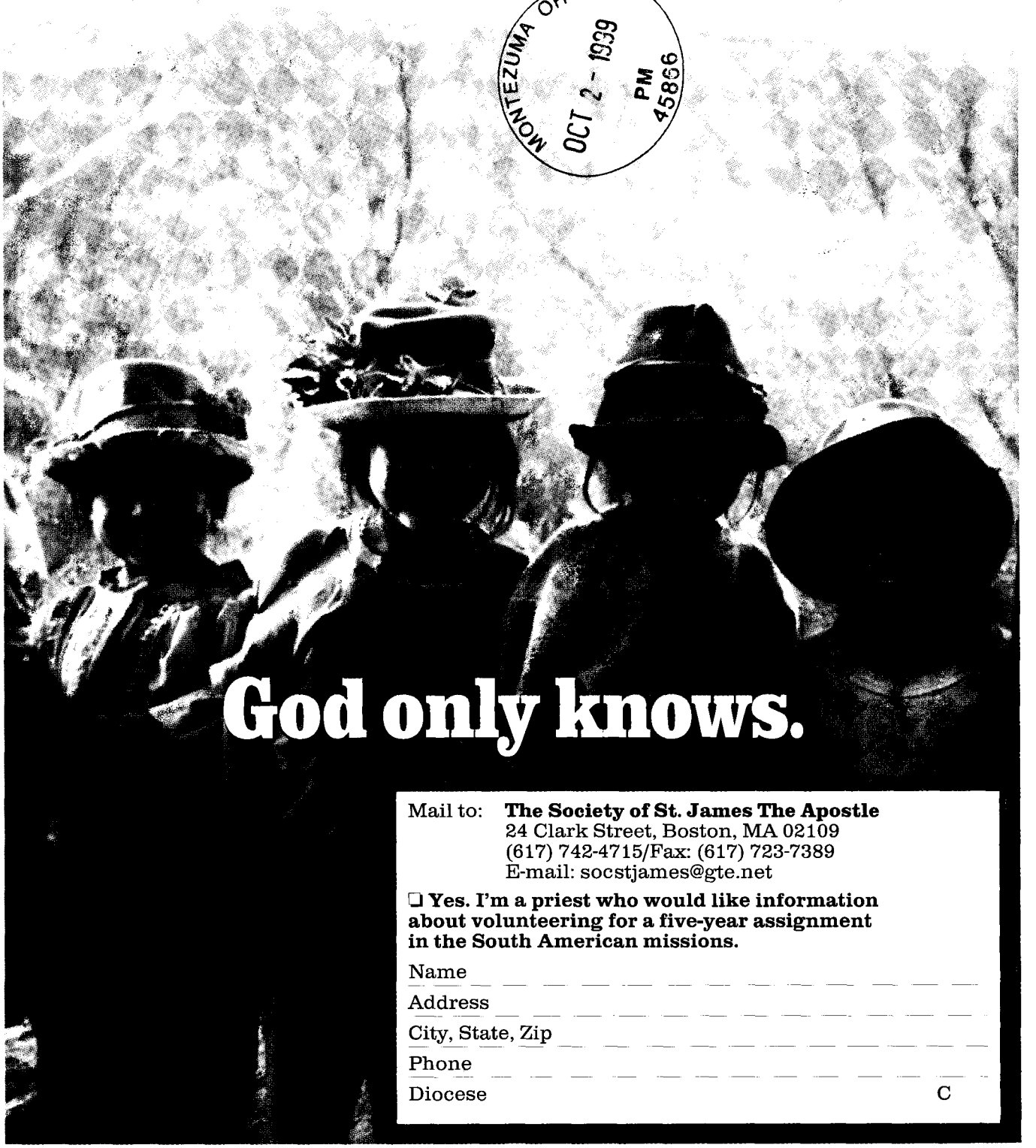

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